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Terror and Insurgency in the Sahara-Sahel Region

Corruption, Contraband, Jihad and the Mali War of 2012–2013

Stephen A. Harmon

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STEPHEN A. HARMON
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To Cyrus, Mariam, and James

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Acknowledgements

This book has taken a long time to come to fruition. It began in my head years ago, long before I imagined it as a specific volume, but the formal impetus for this project came in late 2011 when Ashgate Publishing contacted me to ask if I was interested in doing a volume on the Sahara-Sahel zone of Africa for their series titled The Political Economy of New Regionalisms.

I am grateful to Pittsburg State University for granting me a sabbatical leave to do field research, and to the College of Arts and Sciences for providing release time to facilitate the writing stage. Without such institutional support, this project would never have been possible. I am grateful to my colleagues in the history program and the Department of History, Philosophy, and Social Sciences for picking up slack for me so I would have time to write. During my field research in Mali, I was also supported and encouraged by many people. First and foremost I want to thank my dear friend and colleague Ibrahim Kanté, whom I have known since graduate school, as well as his family. He helped arrange most of the interviews for this book and even offered the use of his home as a place to conduct many of them. Without his help, my research would not have been nearly as fruitful. I also wish to thank the family of the late Amadou Traoré of Dravéla, especially his son Mamadou (Lasky) Traoré of New York, in whose spacious and comfortable house I stayed while in Bamako, and his daughter Nantene (Maman) Traoré who looked after me there. I also wish to thank Amadou Traoré's nephew Bréhima Konaté, my long-time friend and sometime driver. During the research and writing phase I received invaluable help and advice from many friends and colleagues, not least my unofficial research assistant Charles Parker, who located and sent to me countless articles and press reports. I especially want to thank John E. Philips, Paul Zagorski, and Bruce Whitehouse for reading chapter drafts and offering critiques, comments, and suggestions, as well as encouragement throughout the task. Their contributions were extremely valuable, though I take responsibility for any shortcomings or errors. I also wish to thank my department chair, now retired, Dr. Michael A. Kelley for his constant encouragement, his many helpful suggestions and comments, and for recommending me for release time during the writing phase. Lastly, I wish to thank my dear fiancée and writing partner Olive L. Sullivan, a writer, professor of communication, and professional copy editor. I thank her first and foremost for her encouragement right from the beginning of this project and for putting up with my mood swings throughout, but also for her tireless work in proofreading and editing the manuscript and helping me through the difficult and stressful process of preparing and dispatching the finished work. I surely could not have completed this project without her help and moral support.

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Note on Orthography

This study includes words and proper nouns from several languages, including French, Arabic, Tamasheq, Hausa, and Bambara. While I have made formal study of French, Arabic, and Bambara, I claim mastery of none of them. Rather than follow any particular formal orthography, I have opted for simplicity and, I hope, consistency. For Arabic words, I have avoided diacritical marks, though with some exceptions, e.g. al-Qa'ida or Qur'an. For Tamasheq I have relied on Baz Lecocq's transcriptions when possible. I have tried to use proper French for the most part; however, for French place names, I confess I jump around a bit. For example, I have used the English spelling of certain place names if I thought it would be more familiar for my readers. Therefore, I use Timbuktu instead of Timbouktou and Wagadugu instead of Ouagadougou. For Arabic place names, I use a simplified form as opposed to the French orthography, for example Azawad instead of Azaouad, and Tin Zawaten instead of Tin Zaouaten. For Bambara words and place names I have used Charles Bird's Anglicized system, which I studied at UCLA, though for family names and certain place names I have used a Francophone orthography, e.g. Diallo instead of Jalloh, and Diabaly instead of Jabaly. While I am sure that linguistic purists and many other knowledgeable scholars may be unhappy, even scandalized by my mixed orthography, I hope that, at least, the casual reader will have a simpler time of it than he or she otherwise might.

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List of Abbreviations

NOTE: Most of these acronyms derive from the French name of the group or organization. In this volume I have given most of these names in English translation only.

ADEMA	Malian Democratic Alliance
AEEM	Association of Students and Pupils of Mali
AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AFRICOM	Africa Command (US)
AIS	Islamic Salvation Army (Algeria)
AOF	French West Africa
AQI	Al-Qa'ida in Iraq
AQIM	Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb
CENI	National Independent Electoral Commission (Mali)
CNRDRE	National Committee for the Reestablishment of Democracy and Restoration of the State (Mali)
COPAM	Coordination of Patriotic Organizations in Mali
CTSP	Transitional Committee for Public Welfare (Mali)
DRS	Department of Information and Security (Algeria)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EUTM	European Union Training Mission (Mali)
FIAA	Arab Islamic Front of Azawad (Mali)
FIS	Islamic Salvation Front (Algeria)
FLN	National Liberation Front (Algeria)
GIA	Armed Islamic Group (Algeria)
GSPC	Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Algeria)
MDJT	Chadian Movement for Democracy and Justice
MFUA	Unified Movements and Fronts of Azawad
MIA	Armed Islamic Movement (Algeria)
MUJAO	Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa (The English acronym is typically MUJWA)
OCRS	Common Organization of Saharan Regions
POLISARIO	Popular (Front) for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (Western Sahara)
PSI	Pan-Sahel Initiative
RDA	African Democratic Rally (Mali)

TSCTP	Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

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Preface

As I made plans for my most recent field research trip, I wondered how to explain to my publisher why I had chosen Mali as my research destination for a book on terror and insurgency in the African Sahara-Sahel zone. Mali, at that time, seemed almost peripheral to my topic. All that changed in March of 2012, when I was attending an international journalism conference in Paris. While taking the metro to Place Monge one morning I was rudely jolted by a headline in a newspaper a fellow passenger was reading: "Mali's president overthrown in military coup." At the next stop, I dashed from the train and hurried up the street to buy some newspapers of my own. I quickly learned of the overthrow of Mali's second democratically elected president Amadou Toumani Touré, affectionately known as ATT, by a then unknown army captain. Within days I learned of the subsequent fall of Mali's three northern regional capitals, Kidal, Timbuktu, and Gao, to the secular-nationalist insurgency called the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). The following months bore witness to the expulsion of the mostly Tuareg MNLA fighters from these same captured cities, not by the Malian army, but by two hitherto little-known Islamist militias called Ansar Dine and the Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa, known by its French acronym MUJAO. Both of these groups had initially supported the MNLA militarily but were also said to be linked to the Algeria-based terrorist network Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). To my dismay and to Mali's grief, my problem had been solved: Mali had moved from periphery to front and center regarding the problems of terrorism and insurgency in the Sahara-Sahel region.

When I first began this project, I wanted to explore these problems, which had been prominent in the news and had been major subjects of discussion in academia for at least a decade. Over that period, these same issues have also been the primary foci of my research. Terrorism and insurgency have manifested themselves in several countries that comprise what I am calling the Sahara-Sahel region. But in some of these countries, the problems of terror and insurgency extend beyond the Sahara in the north and beyond the Sahel in the south. As a result, I decided to delineate as a region, or meta-region, the countries of North and West Africa that have been affected by terrorism and insurgency in whole or in part. The meta-region I am postulating includes, most specifically, Algeria, Mali, and Nigeria, with substantial reference to Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania, as well as portions of Libya, Morocco, and Western Sahara.

The Sahara-Sahel region and the broader meta-region are defined historically by several common features: trans-Saharan trade, which linked the Maghreb and

the Niger Valley as early as Classical times;[1] Islamic heritage, which has included both radical and moderate forms of Islam;[2] and the countries' shared experiences of colonial rule and decolonization from the late nineteenth to the mid twentieth centuries. The region has also been defined more recently by the double-edged phenomenon of contraband smuggling and human trafficking on one hand and Islamist terrorism and secular insurgency on the other. In recent years it has been further defined by US-led security initiatives, including the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), its successor the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Program (TSCTP), and most recently AFRICOM, a separate US military command for Africa. The TSCTP, in particular, encompassed North African countries like Algeria as well as West African countries such as Nigeria and Mali.

The Sahara-Sahel region, as well as the broader meta-region I have delineated, is defined, among other ways, by a common economy based on intra-regional connectivity, shared infrastructure, and locally defined moral sanction. The problem is that this regional economy cannot function efficiently. This economic dysfunction is due to a multitude of factors, but four of the important causes are arbitrary international borders and other colonial-era transformations, corrupt officials of both high and low status, a tenuous and poorly maintained infrastructure, and, not least, ethnic and cultural rivalries that periodically erupt in violence. As a result, much of the regional economy has gone underground. This underground economy is likewise characterized by four key features: relative degrees of illegality and morality; cultural and religion-based moral supports; ethnic and political conflict, often bitter, over access to the underground economy; and modern transport infrastructure, such as trucks, electric water pumps, and telecommunications.

Over the past decade or so, all of these social, economic, and infrastructural features have manifested themselves in extreme versions. Examples include extreme illegality and immorality in the forms of cocaine trafficking; the kidnapping of foreign, chiefly European, hostages for ransom; and the exploitation of labor migrants. They also include extreme nationalism and Islamic radicalism, terrorism, insurgencies, and ethnic cleansing. Likewise included are modern forms of infrastructure, such as satellite phones, four-wheel drive vehicles, and aircraft. Such extreme manifestations, especially criminality, Islamic radicalism, and multiple insurgencies, have provoked regional destabilization and have generated a security crisis. This crisis, in its early phases, led to the series of securitization initiatives mentioned above, which were developed and supported by the US and its western allies. The stated goals of these initiatives included counterterrorism, contraband interdiction, and border security. I am arguing that the ultimate failure

1 Scheele, Judith and James McDougall. "Introduction: Time and Space in the Sahara." James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds), *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 1.

2 For recent research on this topic see Roman Loimeier, *Muslim Societies in Africa: A Historical Anthropology*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013, Chapters 2–4.

to achieve these objectives led directly to the Mali War of 2012–2013 and to the subsequent Franco-African military intervention of January 2013.

This volume is broken down into eight chapters. Chapter 1 consists of three main parts. The first part will further define the Sahara-Sahel region and the broader meta-region. This region is defined by an economy that links disparate components together. This economy includes what was once called the trans-Saharan trade, which in reality comprised trade between the Sahara and northern Algeria, trade within the Sahara, and trade between the Sahara and Sahel and southern Mali and northern Nigeria. As such, the Sahara-Sahel region acts as the linchpin of the meta-regional economy because it provides the links that tie the various sub-regions together. It is such linkage, or connectivity, to borrow Judith Scheele's term, that is the key to the greater regional economy.[3] The second part of Chapter 1 will consider the historical background to the North and West Africa meta-region and its component sub-regions, especially the Sahara-Sahel zone. The third part of Chapter 1 will examine developments and conditions in the post-independence period up to the pivotal year 1990, concentrating on northern Mali and southern Algeria. We will explore the process of state building and the roles of commerce, Islam, and ethnicity in it.

Chapters 2 through 4 will focus on Algeria, Mali, and Nigeria respectively. Chapter 2 will trace Islam and state building in primarily northern Algeria, including an attempt at political pluralism after decades of single-party rule. The third part of Chapter 2 will discuss the bloody Algerian civil war that broke out after the military government attempted to thwart the electoral success of new Islamist political parties. This struggle, the so-called "Dirty War" between the Islamist militants and the military government, which manifestly rose to the levels of terrorism and insurgency, took place largely in northern Algeria, though it eventually spilled over into the Sahara. The fourth part of Chapter 2 will trace the evolution of the GSPC, an Islamist terrorist organization that arose out of the chaos of the civil war, into a Qa'ida franchise called Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Like the GSPC before it, AQIM also expanded into the Sahara, where it took on aspects of what we shall call a "hybrid" group, as much focused on organized crime and accumulation of wealth as with the overthrow of the Algerian government and the advancement of the global jihad.

Chapter 3 will focus on the pro-democracy coup of 1991 in Mali, the democratic government established in its wake, and on the Tuareg and Arab insurgencies that shook the newly democratic state in the first two decades of its existence. The first part will examine the rise of a promising democracy that made Mali an international showcase of democratic transition and a darling of donor nations. However, as we will see in the second part of the chapter, this democracy looked good on the paper, but it favored a savvy political elite and did not sink deep roots among ordinary Malians. Meanwhile, both democratic governance and

3 Scheele, Judith. *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, passim.

economic expansion were undercut by entrenched corruption in politics, the civil administration, and the military. This endemic corruption, which will be the focus of the third section of Chapter 3, weakened electoral politics, the government, and the army, resulting in a hollow state that collapsed precipitously in 2012 in the face of a military coup and ethnic- and religion-based insurgencies. However, prior to the Islamist terrorist insurgencies that occupied the northern half of Mali in 2012, Mali was wracked by two nationalist insurgencies among the Tuareg and Arabs of the north in 1990–1996 and 2006–2009. These secular-nationalist northern insurgencies will be the subject of the final section of Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 will focus on the development of radical Islamic movements resulting in the spread of terrorism and insurgency in northern Nigeria in the period after independence. This chapter will consist of four parts. The first part will cover the historical background of Nigerian Islam and a sketch of Nigerian political history. The second part will examine moderate Islam in Nigeria, especially the Sufi brotherhoods. The third part will discuss the radicalization of Islam in northern Nigeria, including the establishment of shariah law in 19 northern states. The fourth part of the chapter will seek to explain the rise and spread of the extremely radical and violent Islamist Boko Haram movement. This movement and its spinoffs have clearly raised the stakes to the level of terrorism and insurgency in northern Nigeria.

Chapter 5 will examine international responses to the perceived security liability presented by the expansion of terrorism and insurgency in the Sahara-Sahel zone, as well as the ongoing Islamist insurgencies in Algeria and Nigeria. This perceived security deficit resulted in the creation of a number of securitization initiatives on the part of the US and its western allies. The inclusion of such disparate countries as Algeria and Nigeria in a single program aimed at counter-terrorism and suppression of Islamist insurgencies lends further definition to the North and West Africa meta-region that is the secondary focus of this volume.

Chapter 6 will focus on the accelerated destabilization in North and West Africa in the decade between 2002 and 2012, especially in Algeria and Nigeria. The destabilization in Algeria involved the expansion of the AQIM into the Algerian and Malian Sahara. The second part of Chapter 6 will examine an evolution in tactics and possible international affiliation on the part of Nigeria's Boko Haram movement. Such developments raised the specter of a continent-wide front in the global jihad involving AQIM, Boko Haram, and the Somalian Al-Shabab, all orchestrated by al-Qa'ida central, then still operating in the confines on Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions.

While such alarming hypotheses may have been overblown, the simmering terrorism, trafficking, and insurgencies, both Islamist and secular-nationalist, did finally blow up in the Mali War of 2012–2013, the first part of which will be the focus of Chapter 7. The war thrust Mali onto center stage in the turbulent region. It highlighted the international nature of the conflict and exposed Mali as a nexus of terrorism, organized crime, and insurgency, all of which had been characteristics of the regional instability since the early 2000s. Chapter 7 will consist of three major

parts, the first of which will cover the northern insurgency, as well as the Islamist insurgencies that superseded it. The second part will discuss the military coup in the capital Bamako that resulted in the overthrow of Mali's procedural democracy by a military junta. The third part will examine the occupation of northern Mali by the Islamist terrorist militias Ansar Dine and the Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), as well as the slow buildup of international support for some sort of intervention.

Chapter 8 will discuss the subsequent multi-national intervention in Mali in 2013. It will also discuss the aftermath of that international intervention and the restoration of electoral democracy in Mali as well as the attempts of AQIM and its affiliated terrorist groups to regroup in places like Mauritania, Niger, and the ungoverned spaces in southern Libya.

Research for this volume is based on my examination over the last 10 years of Islamist insurgency in Algeria in the aftermath of that country's bloody civil war of the 1990s. Likewise, I have researched Mali's democratic transition and its emergence as a continental model of pluralism and economic growth. My research on Algerian Islamist insurgency and Malian democratic transition, as well as on Nigeria's growing Islamist insurgency, consisted largely of journalistic accounts and secondary sources. In addition, like many American Islamicists since the events of 9/11, I have conducted extensive research on radical Islamic terrorist organizations from Algeria to Iraq to Afghanistan, and on counter-terrorism efforts associated with the Global War on Terror.

I did have an opportunity to view Mali's seeming political and economic successes during a short research trip to Bamako in 2005. I conducted further field research for this volume during an extended trip to Mali in 2012 at the height of the Islamist insurgency. This research focused on oral interviews I conducted with 17 people, mostly Malian. The interview respondents included government functionaries, journalists, student organizers, and people displaced by the Islamist occupation of the north. While some of these respondents gave knowledgeable and specific information about the insurgency in the north or about the political crisis at the capital, others were expressing their personal opinions, sometimes based on hearsay and popular belief. As such, some of the interviews provide information that is relevant not because it is objectively accurate but because it reflects aspects of Malian popular opinion and belief. It therefore helps explain why Malians took the actions they did and why they believe what they believe. Most of my time in Mali in 2012 was spent in the capital, safe from the occupation of the north. But in Bamako I witnessed the political and economic dislocation caused by the occupation of more than half of the country by extremist Islamist militias, the military coup of March 2012, and the halting attempts of an interim government to maintain order and prevent further expansion by the insurgents. I also witnessed how the coup and the insurgency laid bare the myths of Malian democracy and economic progress, both of which were grievously undermined by rampant corruption. This book, therefore, is the product of many years of research on Malian political and economic development, Algerian civil war

and Islamist insurgencies, Nigerian Islamic radicalism and terrorism, and US counterterrorism policy in Africa.

Chapter 1
The Sahara-Sahel Zone: Historical Background

Introduction:

Regions come and go. Unlike jurisdictions, whose boundaries are established and delineated on maps, regional boundaries are subject to opinion. They shift, converge, or divide when impelled to do so by changing circumstances, whether economic, political, climatic, or religious, or some combination of these. Sometimes new regions emerge that call into question existing ones, overlapping, joining, and absorbing earlier regional formations. This volume focuses on the Sahara-Sahel region that includes parts of both North and West Africa. It is defined by economic, political, religious, and geostrategic factors. It joins parts of North and West Africa in ways that defy older models. The Sahara-Sahel zone bridges two major recognized regions, the Mediterranean world and sub-Saharan Africa. As such, the Sahara "falls through conceptual grids and lies outside of research projects." It has fallen in the gap between recognized fields of study such as African Studies or Middle Eastern Studies, and has often been overlooked by researchers.[1] The region I am attempting to define includes the Saharan and Sahelian reaches of Algeria, Mali, Niger, and Mauritania, as well as parts of Libya, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria. The Sahara-Sahel region exists within a broader meta-region I will call, for lack of a better term, North and West Africa. This meta-region, as I am defining it, includes all of Algeria, Mali, Niger, and Mauritania, as well as the Western Sahara, southwestern Libya, northern Nigeria, and parts of Burkina Faso. While the Sahara-Sahel region is the focus of this book, the North and West African meta-region is its setting.

Although the Sahara-Sahel region contains numerous ethnic groups, the historical migratory range of one particular group, the Tuareg, seems to define its core. Also known linguistically as Tamasheq, the Tuareg are a nomadic people whose traditional range extends through parts of five countries, Algeria, Mali, Libya, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The Kel Tamasheq, as they are also called, inhabit the valleys (*wadis*) and the mountains of the central Sahara where life is possible.[2]

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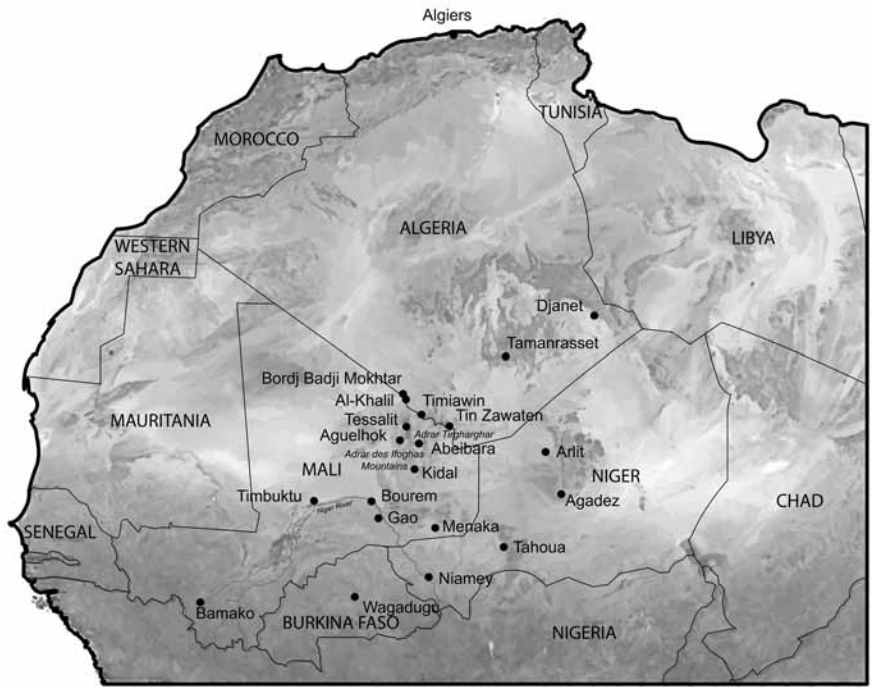
1 Scheele, Judith and James McDougall. "Introduction" in James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, pp. 5, 11.

2 Lecocq, Baz. *Disputed Desert: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms, and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali.* Leiden: Brill, 2010, pp. 260–61; Hall, Bruce S. *A*



Map 1.1 North and West Africa

Credit: Max Rinkel

Though small in number compared to several of the much more populous surrounding ethnic groups, they play an important role in the region because of their mobility, their participation in trade and transport, and their tendencies towards insurrection. Other important ethnic groups sharing the region include Saharan Arabs of Algeria, Mali, and Mauritania; Songhai, Fulani, and Bambara of Mali; and Hausa-Fulani of northern Nigeria. Scholars and observers have likewise noticed that economic, social, and historical factors link the ethnic groups within the region in several ways. Social anthropologist Judith Scheele, for example, stresses this regional unity and connectivity in her recent book *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara*. She points out that in the 1920s as the Niger bend entrepôt of Gao grew in importance, cattle trade with the Nigerian city of Kano expanded, boosting Gao's economy. She adds that merchants from Niger had their own quarter at Gao, as did various ethnic groups of the French Soudan (Mali), including Tuareg, Arab,

History of Race in Muslim West Africa: 1600–1960. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 299.

Songhai and Fulani, as well as Algerian Arabs.[3] Scheele identifies the seemingly remote Algeria-Mali border region north of Kidal as an illustrative example of regional connectivity, describing it as a major crossroads of commerce, including illicit commerce.[4] Journalist Christine Holzbaur likewise notes the many kinds of traffic that ply the Algeria-Mali border area, including arms, vehicles, and human migrants from many West African countries, especially Mali and Nigeria.[5]

As noted in the preface, the Sahara-Sahel region is also defined by its shared experience with European, especially French, colonial rule and with the decolonization period of the 1950s. Historian Bruce Hall points out how, in a futile attempt to retain a measure of its waning control and influence in Saharan Africa, the French government proposed and supported two failed irredentist schemes, including the *Organisation commune des régions sahariènnes* (OCRS) and French Saharan Africa (ASF), both of which included all or parts Mauritania, southern Algeria, and the Saharan regions of the French Soudan (Mali), Niger and Chad.[6] Though unsuccessful, these schemes highlighted the regional interdependence of the North and West African nations linked by this Saharan and Sahelian core. Both schemes will be discussed further later in this chapter. Historian and Africanist Baz Lecocq, citing a report from a French official of the 1950s, notes, "Arab tribes, including Rgaybat, Tajakant and Berabish tribes, and the Kel Tamasheq [Tuaregs], thought and acted in interlinking networks of commerce, clan, and family affiliation extending from Colomb-Béchar, through Tindouf through Timbuktu and Agadez."[7] The arc thus described extends from the Moroccan border area of Algeria through northern Mali to central Niger, illustrating the nature of the links that bind North and West Africa. Such links were further extended after the drought years of the early 1970s, which severely weakened the pastoral economy of the Saharan Arab and Tuareg populations, forcing many of them to emigrate to, among other places, the cities of southern Mali and to even more distant West African cities as far as Abidjan and Lagos, as well as to Niger and parts of the Maghreb.[8] Lecocq also says that since the droughts, the towns of southern Algeria and Libya have been booming, partly because Malian Tuaregs fleeing the drought in Mali settled there and partly because they began to attract labor migrants, mostly from Sahelian and coastal West African countries. Therefore, he notes, Tuareg society has evolved from a "coherent regional base to a diaspora of community

3 Scheele, Judith (2012a). *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 7, 223.

4 Scheele, 2012a, p. 115.

5 Holzbaur, Christine. "Les inquietants emirs du Sahel," *L'Express*, November 28, 2002, p. 2.

6 Hall, 2011, pp. 275, 299.

7 Lecocq cites a report of a Saharan tour undertaken by Marcel Cardaire in 1956. Lecocq, 2010, p. 53.

8 Lecocq, 2010, p. 255.

pockets around West Africa, the Maghreb and Europe."[9] The dislocation of the Saharan Arab and Tuareg pastoralists by drought is an example of modification of regional boundaries due to changes in climatic conditions.

More recent schemes put forward by outside powers seeking influence in Africa have also run across the inconvenience of traditional regional breakdowns of the northern half of Africa. AFRICOM, a new US military command established under the Bush and Obama administrations, was partly designed to remove an inconvenient "seam" that had put sub-Saharan Africa under a different command than North Africa. Since AFRICOM's mission targeted the Sahara-Sahel zone that embraces both North and West African nations, one of the motives for the creation of the new command was to eliminate this artificial frontier.[10] US diplomatic communiques subsequently published by Wikileaks quoted Algeria's ambassador to Mali remarking to US State Department officials, "Algeria's and Mali's fate were tied together by history and geography."[11] While part of a larger set of documents, this statement reveals an understanding on the part of both North and West Africans that their past and present-day realities are inextricably linked by historical, geographic, economic, and cultural ties. That such inter-regional links and dependencies continue to be a factor in present crises is borne out by the fact that events associated with the Arab Spring in North Africa have had major spillover implications for West African countries like Mali. Numerous observers have commented that events stemming from the fall of the Qadaffi regime in Libya helped lead to the fall of Mali's democratically elected government in 2012.[12]

Historical Background

Having identified the regional focus of the volume, this chapter will now address aspects of the region's historical background to explain how its multiple crises of terrorism and insurgency developed over the years. Part two of this chapter will examine first the Saharan core of the region, discussing the various ethnic groups that live in and around it as well as the social structure and economy of those groups, particularly the Tuareg. Next will be a discussion of the period of French colonial rule, concentrating on Algeria and Mali. This discussion will examine ways in which the colonial presence influenced inter-ethnic relations, especially in the French Soudan, the future Mali Republic, as well as the development of colonial infrastructure and commerce in Algeria and the Soudan. Special attention will be paid to the roles played by slavery and race in these inter-ethnic relations.

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9 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 227–8, 235, 241.

10 Shillinger, Kurt. "Attacks in Mali, Libya, Algeria show why Africa still needs US support," *Morocco on the Move.* January 28, 2013, p. 2.

11 Wikileaks Cable, Bamako. February 10, 2012.

12 International Crisis Group. "Mali: Avoiding Escalation," *Africa Report No 189*. July 18, 2012, p. 9.

This section will also examine the critical period of decolonization in the 1950s and early 1960s, including aspects of the Algerian struggle for independence. The next section will focus on the post-independence period, concentrating on Mali. This section will consider the creation of the Malian state with particular reference to the Tuareg, including the first Tuareg insurgency against the Malian government, the *Alfellaga*, the impact of the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s; and the exile of much of the Malian Tuareg community to Algeria and Libya.

Ethnicity and Social Structure in the Pre-colonial Sahara-Sahel Zone

While many ethnic groups and sub groups occupy the Algerian and Malian Sahara, four main ethnicities hhistorically have dominated the region down to the Niger bend area and extending eastward into Niger and westward into Mauritania. These groups include Tuareg, who speak Tamasheq; Arabs, who speak the Hassaniyya dialect of Arabic; Fulbe, who speak Fulfulde; and Songhai, whose language is sometimes called Koroboro Senni.[13] In northern Mali the largest group is the Songhai, about 45 percent, and the smallest group is the Arabs, about 7 percent.[14] The Tuareg are descended from ancient Berber speakers who occupied northern Africa millennia ago, but whose recent lifestyle was made possible by the introduction of the camel from Arabia in classical times.[15] Since then they have lived chiefly by pastoralism and commerce. The Arabs are descended either from Arab settlers who occupied coastal North Africa during and following the wave of Muslim conquests in the seventh and eighth centuries or from nomadic Arabs like the Banu Maqil and the Banu Hassan who reached the Maghreb in medieval times. The Hassaniyya dialect derives from the latter. Arabs from the north coastal cities, practicing an urban and commercial lifestyle, have spread into the Algerian Sahara in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Pastoral Hassaniyya-speaking Arabs, also known as Bidan, practice a desert economy in the Malian and Mauritanian Sahara.[16] The Fulbe reached the Niger bend and Macina areas in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as part of the easterly expansion of their transhumant lifestyle, which included herding of both cattle and goats, that ultimately carried them to Hausaland in what is today northern Nigeria. In recent centuries some Fulbe have

13 Hall, 2011, p. 29.

14 INSTAT *(Institut National de la Statistique, République du Mali)*. 2011. 4ème Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat du Mali (RGPH-2009). Résultats définitifs, Tome 1: Série démographique.

15 Ehret, Christopher. *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002, pp. 154–5.

16 Bruce Hall (2011, p. 35) discusses the process of Arabization, saying perhaps half of the original Berber-speaking population in the Sahel in the fourteenth century had become Arabic speaking by the eighteenth century. This Arabization was partly due to in-migrations of the Banu Maqil and the Banu Hassan, and partly due to acculturation and intermarriage.

abandoned their transhumant, pastoral lifestyle and moved into Sahelian towns, practicing commerce and clerisy. They constitute some 7 percent of the population in northern Mali, though they are concentrated in and around Timbuktu.[17] Many Fulbe no longer speak Fulfulde; rather, they now speak Songhai.[18] The Songhai have possibly the oldest roots in the region, being linguistically descended from Nilo-Saharan speakers whose aquatic lifestyle spread westward from the Nile during the Saharan wet phase between 9000 and 6000 BCE.[19] After an imperial phase in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries CE, the Songhai practiced a riverine agricultural and commercial economy along the Niger bend up to recent times.[20] The interaction of these ethnic groups combined with the interposition of French colonial rule and cultural influence to shape the history of the Sahara-Sahel zone.

Numerous sources discuss the social structure of the Saharan and Sahelian ethnic groups, starting with Arabic language texts of pre-colonial times and the assessments of French scholar-administrators during the colonial period, to contemporary African and western scholars in the post-independence period. They all agree that the four above-mentioned groups were intentionally divided by class, by occupational specialization, and by race, or perceptions of race. The Arabs, Tuareg, Fulbe, and Songhai all reckoned themselves in various forms of noble, free, and servile status. Typically, the free lineages within each ethnic group were clients of the noble lineages, while the servile-status groups were bound to either free lineages or noble lineages. The servile-status groups were typically regarded as not only socially distinct from the free and noble lineages, but racially distinct as well, with servile-status groups being regarded as "black" and free and noble-status groups being regarded as "white" or "non-black." As we will see, this perception of racial difference frequently had little to do with actual skin color, and yet it was and continues today to be a factor in inter-ethnic relations and indeed in inter-ethnic conflict.[21]

The Tuareg noble lineages were divided into warrior-status and clerical-status groups. While both warrior-status and clerical-status groups practiced pastoralism and martial skills, the warrior-status groups specialized in warfare and raiding as well as in political leadership, while the clerical-status groups had specializations in clerisy and commerce. Warrior-status groups linked their legitimacy to narratives of conquest, while clerical-status groups claimed descent from founding saints. Two important Tuareg noble lineages of the Niger bend area included the Iwellemmedan (warrior-status) and the Kel Essuk (clerical-status).[22] The free-status groups practiced pastoralism in the wadis but could also be called

17 INSTAT 2011.

18 Grémont, Charles, Andre Marty, et al. *Les lien sociaux au Nord-Mali: Entre fleuve et dunes.* Paris: Editions Karthala, 2004, p. 30.

19 Ehret, 2002, pp. 68–71.

20 Grémont et al. 2004, p. 31.

21 Grémont et al. 2004, p. 51.

22 Hall, 2011, pp. 60, 155, 187.

upon to fight. Both noble and free-status groups managed servile-status lineages that practiced oasis cultivation as well as personal service for their masters. The warrior-status groups of Tuareg, or Tamasheq, society were called *imushagh*. They were noble warriors who saw themselves as white and practiced an honor/shame culture. At the center of this honor/shame culture was the *temushaga*, the way of the *imushagh*, which meant knowledge of honor and shame and knowledge of one's own lineage (*temet*). The clerical lineages were called *ineslemen*. They had sidelines in Islamic clerisy and considered themselves noble and white, and they also held to the *temushaga*. The free lineages too tried to live by the *temushaga*, rearing the cattle of their noble lords as well as their own. Below them were the *inaden*, casted craftsmen and artisans. They were considered racially black, but not slave. The servile-status groups, or slaves, comprised the bottom of the Kel Tamasheq hierarchy. They were called *iklan*, and were considered racially black, but usually spoke Tamasheq and saw themselves as Tuareg.[23]

The Hassaniyya-speaking Arabs of the Malian and Mauritanian Sahara similarly reckoned themselves in class-based lineages, including noble warrior-status groups called *hassan*, noble clerical-status groups called *zawiya*, and free-status groups called *lakhma*. Their relations and occupational specializations were similar to those described above. Again like the Tuareg, the Arab lineages also included casted artisans, as well as servile-status groups or slaves, called *haratin*, from the Arabic word for plow. Social relations between the noble *hassan* and clerical *zawiya* lineages crystalized in the seventeenth century as *zawiya* lineages attempted to escape their status as clients of the *hassani* by confronting them militarily. These attempts were motivated at least in part by reformist Muslim clerics who claimed political legitimacy by virtue of their piety and adherence to Islamic law.[24] The *zawiya* clerics failed to hold onto power, but similar movements achieved degrees of success, as we will see, among Fulbe lineages. The two most important Arab groups of the Malian Sahara and Sahel include the Berabish, who are warrior-status (*hassan*) and the Kunta, who are clerical-status (*zawiya*). The Kunta religious confederacy emerged in the Malian Sahara in the late seventeenth century. They established their fortified schools (also called *zawiya*) throughout the Azawad, as well as in the Mauritanian Hohd, the Tilemsi valley in northeastern Mali, around the Touat oases of central Algeria, and as far east as the Aïr Mountains of northern Niger.[25]

The Fulbe and Songhai also had noble, free, and servile-status groups. The clerical-status groups of the Fulbe were known as Torodbe. Torodbe clerics were inspired by the attempts of the Arab *zawiya* groups to defeat their *hassan* overlords and assume political authority based on their Islamic legitimacy. Beginning in the

23 Interview 108 (Songhai woman from Gao) Part 1; Lecocq, 2010, pp. 5–6.

24 Hall, 2011, p. 39.

25 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 44, 46–7; Hall, 2011, p. 43. The Kunta claim descent from Sidi Ahmad al Kunti (d. 1515) who famously saved the people of Walata from a plague of lions by demonstrating what Sufis call power over beasts (Hall, 2011, p. 63).

late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries they challenged their own warrior-status rulers in the Sahel. Some of the Torodbe clerics were successful in these endeavors and went on to establish Muslim emirates or caliphates, usually linked to Sufi brotherhoods, from Futa Toro and Bundu in Senegal to Macina in Mali and Hausaland in Nigeria. Some of these polities survived until the French and British occupations in the 1890s and early 1900s.[26] The nobles in each of the four ethno-linguistic groups of the Malian Sahara-Sahel zone, including Fulbe, and Songhai, came to think of themselves as non-black, distinct from the their black slaves (*bellah*) and other socially inferior peoples.[27] "White" and "black" status was not based primarily on observable skin color. What mattered, at least in the pre-colonial period, was what was called the "historic moment of conversion." Some groups regarded themselves as "bearers of Islam," while others were seen as permanent infidels, despite having converted, in some cases, generations earlier. Blackness came to define servile status in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a result of polemic gyrations on the part of literate Muslim scholars of the Sahara, who left detailed documents in Arabic. These texts linked a long history of Islamic practice and a certain level of instruction in Islamic law and custom with non-black, civilized, morally correct status, in contrast to peoples whose Islamic pedigree might be shorter and whose level of instruction rudimentary or incomplete with black, pagan, and morally corrupt status.[28] These perceived "racial" differences, however counterintuitive they might appear to outside observes, could at times trump linguistic bonds. Even Songhai nobles were perceived to be racially superior to lower-status Songhai and were considered non-black by French colonial officials.[29]

Ethnicity and Race during the French Conquest

The French likewise understood the Arab and Tuareg nobles in the French Soudan to be outsiders, racially distinct from the "indigenous" blacks. The Tuareg saw themselves as the traditional rulers over the black settled populations of the Niger bend.[30] The French abolished slavery in their West African colonial territories starting in 1905, but they found themselves unable or unwilling to address the issue of slavery in the northern part of the French Soudan, the future Mali.[31] They needed the support of the noble warrior-status groups, both Tuareg and Arab, for legitimacy and military support. As a result, they overlooked the nobles'

26 Harmon, Stephen. "Ils sont retirés des biens du monde: Islamic reform and community in Senegambia, c. 1660–1800." *Africa Zamani: An Annual Journal of African History*. 1997, passim.

27 Hall, 2011, p. 173.

28 Scheele, 2012a, p. 134; Hall, 2011, pp. 29, 74.

29 Hall, 2011, p. 178.

30 Lecocq, 2010, p. 88.

31 Lecocq, 2010, p. 109.

exploitation of their servile-status groups. As Hall explains, "The French regime in the Niger bend was fundamentally structured along lines of racial difference."[32] Abolition of slavery had been part of the *mission civilisatrice française.* Failure to put abolition into practice undermined this mission.[33] French military forces captured Timbuktu in 1893 and Gao in 1898.[34] Initially they saw the Tuareg as their principal antagonists. Military campaigns against the Tuareg continued until 1912, by which time most of the Tuareg had been defeated. But in 1916 many of the Tamasheq confederations revolted against French occupation led by the Iwellemmedan. The Iwellemmedan confederacy had dominated the Région of Gao from the late eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century.[35] The 1916 rebellion was brutally crushed, ending in a massacre of hundreds of Iwellemmedan, including women and children. The crushing of this rebellion resulted in a breakdown of traditional dependency relationships, including slavery and tribute, as well as new restrictions on riverine access such as privatization of arable lands and restrictions on movements to pasturelands. It also resulted in the rise of the Ifoghas, who had helped the French defeat their former Iwellemmedan overlords, as an independent noble lineage.[36] After the rebellion of 1916 was put down, colonial authorities maintained relative peace through dependence on allied Tuareg and Arab irregular troops called *goumiers*, led by local leaders called *goums*.[37] Arab tribes of Mauritania, usually called Moors, continued to resist French rule gamely. A Moor leader named Ma al-Ainin bedeviled the French between 1906 and 1912 from his base at Smara in the Spanish Sahara.[38] Ma al-Ainin was supported until his death in 1913 by the redoubtable Rgaybat tribe. The Rgaybat were Arabic-speaking, rifle-armed, camel-mounted raiders based in the Spanish-controlled Saguiat al-Hamra, where they could not be pursued by French troops and their local allies. They continued their raids even after the death of Ma al-Ainin, gathering together in raiding parties of up to 500 warriors to raid the Niger bend for slaves and camels. These raids, or *razias*, continued up to the 1930s. Finally a joint French-Spanish raid on Smara in 1934 forced the last of the Rgaybat leaders to surrender.[39]

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32 Hall, 2011, pp. 132, 181.

33 Lecocq, Baz. "The Bellah Question: Slave Emancipation, Race, and Social Categories in Late-Twentieth Century Northern Mali." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 39 (1), 2005, p. 49.

34 Grémont et al. 2004, p. 131.

35 Grémont et al. 2004, p. 29.

36 Grémont et al. 2004, pp.142, 145.

37 Hall, 2011, pp. 68–74.

38 Harmon, Stephen. "Sheikh Ma' al-'Aynayn: Armed resistance and French policy in Northwest Africa, 1900–1910." *Jusur* 8, 1992, passim.

39 Lecocq, 2010, p. 63; Hall, 2011, pp. 165–6.

The Colonial Period in the Algerian Sahara

The Importance of Place

Most settlements in the Algerian Sahara specifically, and more broadly throughout the central Sahara, were founded by saints. Founding saints came from the heartlands of Islam, the urban centers of the Maghreb or, better yet, from Syria or Mesopotamia. Following divine guidance, they were imbued with *baraka* (blessing). They made sweet water flow in the desert, and they attracted followers to settle with them.[40] Scheele argues that the successful making of place in the Algerian Sahara is a key attribute of saintliness. Gardens and groves, similarly, are manifestations of *baraka* and proof of divine favor. The archetypical settling saint comes with a civilizing mission and establishes a place in the Sahara or Sahel; he brings civilization and preaches Islam. He turns "*badiya* into *qariya*, wilderness into village." Ideally the saint would be a *sharif* descended from an important North African religious lineage. Once founded, all Saharan settlements are made by migrants. These migrants, whether from northern Algeria, the Sahel, or the Sudan, remember their outside origins and often cling to neighborhoods of migrants with the same or similar ethnic origins. These outside origins are reflected in architecture, dress, food, speech, and social behavior.[41] Saharan settlements usually are arrayed around oases, which Scheele calls, "nodes of legal density and containment, patches of 'civilization' established by local inhabitants—municipal assemblies, scholars, shaykhs, and *qudah* (judges)—not merely for the better ordering of the social, but also because of the establishment and maintenance of proper place has spiritual value." All outside the oasis is *badiya*, (chaos, wilderness).[42] These arid nodes of settlement are home to various ethnic groups, some indigenous to the desert, including the Tuareg, and some coming from more productive and populous but geographically peripheral regions. These remote places are defined not only by the ethnic makeup of their populations, but by forms of morality, which, though influenced by the outside, are established and endorsed by local residents. These forms vary, depending partly on the mores of the various ethnicities involved, yet they also reveal certain commonalities. One such common moral judgment defines the settlements as intrinsically good, since they represent order and shelter and sustenance in an otherwise hostile physical environment. The intrinsic moral value of these settlements is reflected in the way

40 Hall, 2011, p. 197.

41 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 17, 60–61, 65; Scheele, Judith (2012b). "Garage or Caravanserail: Saharan Connectivity in Al-Khalil, Northern Mali" in James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 232.

42 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 17, 174.

their founding figures are remembered as heroes, or even saints, who created order out of chaos, shelter out of barrenness, and opportunity out of desolation.[43]

The Saharan Commercial Economy

Oases are not only nodes of settlement, they are nodes of commerce. Scheele says such oases are never given by "nature," but are built through investments in money and labor. Water resources, for example, require considerable investment in labor. In pre-colonial times, water supplies were secured through the digging of underground water canals called *fagagir*, which provided most of the water in Touat and other Algerian oasis areas.[44] *Fagagir* have been used in the Sahara since ancient times.[45] In colonial times the French began to dig artesian wells in the Algerian Sahara. With enough such investment in infrastructure, including construction and irrigation, an oasis becomes a *qasr,* fortified town. These towns serve as centers of storage and exchange of goods. Assets, such as land, houses, and storage space, are often owned by actors who live far removed from the oasis. Such towns could not survive without investment from the outside. The need for such outside support and investment, frequently from northern Algeria, is another example of the interregional connectivity characteristic of Saharan commerce. This connectivity includes intellectual and moral connectivity, including law and custom, as well as religious sanction and ethics, which can be as important as irrigation and regional exchange in the maintenance of Saharan places. The "moral" lifestyle requires not only law and sanction, but houses, gardens, livestock, and religious education. Oasis towns form part of the infrastructure, both physical and moral, necessary to support regional trade and commerce, including local trade in staples as well as long-distance trade in luxuries and elite goods. The local trade in staple commodities, such as dates and cereals, was considerable in the Sahara and also necessary for survival. It provided support and infrastructure for the long-distance trade and was considered intrinsically good. Local trade in commodities was probably more important than the fabled trans-Saharan trade in gold, salt, ostrich feathers, and other exotic goods, though it is typically overlooked.[46] Most trade in the Sahara is trade to the Sahara, rather than trade across the Sahara. Some 80 percent of all Saharan freight is staples consumed in the Sahara.[47]

The making of place in the Sahara also depended on local marriage alliances. The interregional connectivity was cemented by marriages between outside-based traders and local women, often from nomadic or clerical families. The outsider thus

43 Hall, 2011, p. 197.

44 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 13–14.

45 Schörle, Katia. "Saharan Trade in Classical Antiquity" in James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 64.

46 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 13–18, 27, 43, 96, 174.

47 Scheele and McDougall, 2012, p. 13.

acquires local in-laws who can provide help with organization of trade, selection of routes, protection, guides, and conveyance. Networking ties are thus bolstered. Traders or scholars from the urban centers of northern Algeria establish marriage ties with nomadic Arab women in the oasis towns like In Salah or Tamanrasset. As Saharan towns become more and more secure in their tenuous holds over oases, second and third generation merchants from these places establish marriage ties further south, for example among Tuareg tribes in Kidal or Arab tribes in the Tilemsi area north of Gao, or in Songhai river towns in the Sahel. As Scheele says, "This web of social relations eventually resulted in the development of a multilingual and multireferential society that in turn had an unmistakable impact on both Kidal and the traders' hometowns."[48] These inter-ethnic marriage alliances and the mixed families they create are part of what Malians call the *brassage*, or practice of inter-ethnic marriage leading to an ethnically mixed culture, especially in the towns of the Sahara and Sahel. This pattern of *brassage* is both the necessary condition for and the consequence of interregional Saharan commerce.[49]

These Saharan commercial patterns can be traced to late medieval times, but their development accelerated in the late nineteenth century and throughout the colonial period. In colonial times, Saharan commerce also evolved into new and morally questionable forms. The networks and hubs of long-distance caravan trade in the late nineteenth century evolved into contraband trade in subsidized Algerian and Libyan goods traveling into northern Mali or Niger.[50] The World War II black market laid the foundations of many contemporary fortunes in the Sahara and Sahel and also led to the creation of contemporary smuggling patterns. A black market developed during World War II because Algeria was technically part of France, while French West Africa (AOF) was not. This artificial difference opened up price differentials, and hence smuggling opportunities across what is today the Algeria-Mali border.[51] It was also during and after World War II that truck transport into and across the Sahara began along established routes.[52] Scheele calls World War II the "Golden Age" of Saharan smuggling. The fact that wartime rationing occurred in Algeria but not in AOF made smuggling very lucrative. Profits thus generated were often re-invested in water sources, land, and houses in Algerian towns in the Adrar, Ghardaïa, and Timimoun, thus strengthening place in the Sahara.[53] In the post-independence period, the economic policies of independent Algeria and

48 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 72–5, 93, 110.

49 Interview 108, Part 1; Diakité, Mountaga. "Mali— une' démocratie' contre le peuple," Unpublished document, December 13, 2013.

50 Lacher, 2012, p. 3.

51 Brachet, Julien. "Movements of People and Goods: Local Impacts and Dynamics of Migration to and through the Central Sahara" in James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 252.

52 Scheele and McDougall, 2012, p. 2.

53 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 61–2, 78, 89.

Mali created further price differentials, which led to still more opportunities for profit. Most basic staples, such as powdered milk, flour, pasta, and semolina, were heavily subsidized in independent Algeria thanks to oil wealth. Price differentials across the Malian and Nigerien borders were significant. In such a climate, the boundaries between licit and illicit trade became blurred. Monetary policies also created opportunities for profit. The Algerian dinar could not easily be exchanged for hard currency because of state restrictions, while the CFA franc of Mali was tied to the French franc.[54]

Africans in both North and West Africa considered colonial laws, especially trade regulations, illegitimate. They continued to regard similar regulations developed by the post-independent governments illegitimate as well. As such, moral rather than legal categories determined local classifications of regional trade. From the World War II era through the post-independence period, virtually all trade, whether in legal commodities or illegal contraband, was technically illegal to one degree or another. As a result, all international commerce, including commerce in ordinary commodities, came to be called *al-frud,* from the French *fraude*, fraud or smuggling. The smuggling of legal commodities to profit from the artificial price differentials was called *frud al-halal*, licit fraud, and smuggling of contraband, be it armaments, untaxed cigarettes, arms, drugs, or human migrants, became known as *fraud al-haram*, illicit fraud.[55] Scheele describes the 1970s and 1980s as the "Lahda" period. Lahda was the Algerian state-produced and subsidized powdered milk. Many fortunes were made from smuggling Lahda across the Malian border. Eventually, *al-frud* became an occupation respected by the people of the Algerian and Malian Sahara.[56] Even more extreme forms of *al-frud* would emerge in the Sahara-Sahel zone in the early twenty-first century.

Race and Slavery in the Colonial Sahara and Sahel

The related issues of race and slavery have driven social relations in the Sahara and Sahel since long before the colonial period. While slavery, or servile status, was common in much of Africa, in some cases since ancient times, the curious linkage between race and slavery and the taint of slavery so familiar to those acquainted with US history was not generally a factor in much of Africa. It was, however, a factor along the Sahara-Sahel divide. As mentioned above, the Tuareg and the Bidan (Saharan Arab) peoples considered themselves white, as opposed to Songhai, Fulbe, and other Sahelian African peoples, whom they regarded as black. Lecocq points out that "race" animates discussion of the perceptions of the Tuareg held by other African peoples as well as the perceptions of other Africans held by the Tuareg.[57] The French used the Songhai word *bellah* to denote the servants

54 Lacher, 2012, p. 3; Scheele, 2012a, pp. 61, 82–3.
55 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 22–3.
56 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 83, 110.
57 Lecocq, 2010, p. 90.

of the Tuareg. The Tuareg called their servants *iklan*. The term *bellah*, or *bellah-iklan*, therefore came to denote the black Tuareg, who constituted the majority of the Tamasheq-speaking population in some Sahelian areas, as much as three fourths of the total.[58] The French historian Claude Meillassoux defined slaves as servile people living in their master's household or in semiautonomous villages.[59] Frequently, the Tuareg, as well as other pastoral peoples such as Bidan (Arab) or Fulbe, used their slaves as riverine or oasis cultivators, producing foodstuffs for their master and his family, for their own consumption, or for exchange. Other slaves did personal service or tended animals for their masters. Slavery was historically linked not only to concepts of race, but to Islamization as well. In popular belief, non-Muslim Africans were considered pagans and thus liable for enslavement if captured in war or purchased. As mentioned above, the bringing of Islam was linked in popular perception to the bringing of civilization. Therefore, the slaves of the Muslim pastoral peoples were forever tainted by slavery and unbelief, even after manumission and/or conversion to Islam.[60]

The French did little to hinder the practice of slavery in the Niger bend area during the colonial period, despite having officially abolished slavery in the French Soudan in 1908.[61] The French accepted Sahelian ideas about race and slavery, including a vague equation of blackness with slavery and the notion that the stain of slavery was more or less permanent. Indeed, as Hall argues, the idea of the social inferiority of blacks compared to the "white" Tuareg and Bidan confederacies became an instrument of state under colonial rule, and slavery in the north actually increased under the French.[62] One reason why slavery persisted in the north was that freed or escaping slaves had few options. There were many *villages de liberté* in the south of the French Soudan, but in the north there were few. Likewise, freed slaves had little access to land or herds, and alternatives like military service or labor recruitment were not available as ways to escape slavery as they were in the south. As a result, there were no significant slave exoduses in the north as there were in the south, such as the Banamba slave exodus of 1905. Indeed, the colonial administration actively opposed the ending of slavery in the north.[63] The French needed the military and political support of the Tamasheq and Bidan warrior-status groups for the legitimacy they provided, so they overlooked the nobles' exploitation of their *bellah-iklan* servile peoples. Therefore, the image of "white" Tuareg and Bidan dominating "black" servants persevered throughout

58 Lecocq, 2010, p. 109; Lecocq, 2005, p. 50; Hall, 2011, pp. 212, 288.

59 Cited in Hall, 2011, p. 211.

60 Hall, 2011, p. 210.

61 Lecocq, 2010, p. 109. The French abolished slavery in their African territories originally in 1905, but they denied its existence in the north.

62 Hall, 2011, pp. 209–10.

63 Lecocq, 2010, p. 114; Hall, 2011, p. 219.

the colonial period. The French also granted certain privileges to the Tamasheq and Bidan nobles, including exemption from military conscription and forced labor.[64]

The issue of slavery, as well as the related issue of "race" was brought to the forefront by the process of decolonization in the 1950s. The French knew slavery would be an embarrassment at home and would fuel black African nationalism in the Sudan. Looking for cover, the French authorities in the Niger bend for the first time officially recognized the right of the *bellah-iklan* to own and bequeath property.[65] The Soudanese black ethnic groups, notably the numerically dominant Bambara, perceived the privileges granted to the "white" Kel Tamasheq and Bidan as a sign they had been favorites of the colonial regime. This favoritism, they felt, had given the "whites" a misplaced sense of superiority. In the late 1950s the *Union Soudanaise-Rassemblement Democratique Africain* (US-RDA), the leading pro-independence political party of the Soudan, used the issue of slavery and the promise of its abolition to build political support among the *bellah-iklan* for its candidates. The French had not pushed for the end of slavery in the north because they wanted the political support of the Tamasheq and Bidan nobles. But the US-RDA and its leader Modibo Keita, future president of Mali, did push for abolition. In election slogans the party equated voting with liberty.[66] Keita went on to make elimination of northern slavery an important basis of policy after independence came in 1960.[67] The issues of slavery and race, including the bitter memories of former slaves, and, by extension, of other black ethnic groups, as well as the attitude of superiority and entitlement on the part of former masters, animated and informed the development of rival Tuareg and Malian nationalisms. Indeed, these issues likewise animate and inform relations between the Tamasheq and the Malian state, and, to a lesser extent, the Algerian state, to this day.

Tuareg and Malian Nationalisms

The feature most clearly linking and defining the four Sahelian nations of West Africa, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad is the fact that all of them have one foot rooted in the West African Sahel and one foot rooted in the North African Sahara. As a result, all four of these states have a history of ethnic rivalry, at times culminating in violence. This ethnic rivalry frequently takes the form of relatively fair-skinned pastoral Arab or Tuareg tribal peoples in the north vying for power and/or resources with black African ethnic groups in the Sahelian south. Though the situation is in reality far more complex, in Mali this rivalry has periodically played itself out in the form of insurgencies by the Tuareg, sometimes

64 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 100–101, 111; Lecocq, 2005, p. 45; Hall, 2011, p. 181.

65 Hall, 2011, pp. 284–5, 290. By local custom, the Tuareg and Bidan nobles regarded the property of their *bellah-iklan* as their own, and colonial officials routinely allowed them, for example, to seize the property of their deceased servants.

66 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 101, 110–11; Lecocq, 2005, pp. 46, 53.

67 Hall, 2011, p. 209.

with the support of the Arabs (Bidan), against the Malian state. The epicenter of these Tuareg-led insurgencies has typically been the Adrar des Ifoghas, a range of low desert mountains between the regional capital of Kidal and the Algerian border. Also known as the Adagh, this arid hill country is home to the Ifoghas, a Tuareg clerical-status lineage, who have figured prominently in all of the Tuareg insurgencies.[68] These revolts have been resisted by the Malian state, led by the numerically dominant southern Bambara and supported by the black ethnic groups of the Niger bend area, including Songhai and Fulbe. The Ifoghas often allied with the French during the colonial period, supporting the French against the Iwellemmedan in the 1910s and against the Arab Rgaybat of Mauritania and the Western Sahara in the 1920s. For this support, the Ifoghas were rewarded with independence from their Iwellemmedan overlords and were given noble status. The French needed the legitimacy provided by the Ifoghas to maintain their rule in the Sahara. They also did not want the Adagh to come under Algerian jurisdiction; rather, they wanted it to remain part of French West Africa (AOF). Good rainfall in the 1940s and 1950s allowed the Ifoghas to prosper under French protection.[69]

The ethnic rivalry that has plagued modern Mali between the northern Tuaregs, often led by the Ifoghas, and the Malian state, led by primarily by southern black ethnic groups including the Bambara, has its roots in the colonial period. Lecocq argues this rivalry coalesced into two competing nationalisms, one Tuareg and one Malian, during the late colonial or decolonization period. He distinguishes nationalism from ethnicity, relying on Ernest Gelner, saying, "Nationalism is a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit be congruent."[70] Lecocq says the Malian political elite "imagined the Malian nation as embodying various ethnic groups that should all strive to further the interests of the existing Malian nation-state."[71] One of Modibo Keita's goals was a single Malian nationality speaking Bambara. To this end, Keita encouraged the practice of *brassage*, especially in the north of Mali.[72] Lecocq sees Tamasheq nationalism as a competing nationalism that imagined a separate Tamasheq nation.[73] While Saharan nationalism developed in opposition to Malian nationalism, it was also linked to France's discovery of oil in the Sahara in the mid-1950s, as well as by Moroccan irredentist claims to much of the Sahara which were then being pushed by Morocco's Istiqlal (Independence) Party.[74] Since nationalist ideals were at the heart of the Tuareg-led revolts in

68 Interview 107 (Songhai merchant from Bourem) Part 2. The Adagh also became the location of several AQIM bases after 2003.

69 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 102–3, 153.

70 Gelner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983, p. 1. Cited in Lecocq, 2010, p. 30.

71 Lecocq, 2010, p. 31

72 Interview 108, Part 1.

73 Lecocq, 2010, p. 31.

74 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 23, 62; Scheele, 2012a, p. 169.

the post-independence period, these revolts were primarily secular-nationalist, as opposed to religious or Islamist, in format. The two rival nationalisms first came into sharp focus during the decolonization period. Yet by the time of independence in 1960, the idea of Malian nationalism was not yet deeply rooted. There had been no war of independence like the one Algeria was then fighting. Further, the US-RDA, the leading pro-independence political party of the French Soudan, had been focused on a unified French West African federation, not on a Malian nation-state. In addition, political parties themselves remained an urban phenomenon in the late French Soudan. Therefore, voter turnout in the largely rural colony had been chronically low, especially in the countryside. [75]

Another problem in the late colonial period was the persistence of racially based slavery in the Niger bend. This practice was an embarrassment to the French and an outrage to black African nationalists. Black African ethnic groups, including the Songhai and the Bambara, reckoned Tuareg claims to pasturage along the river area derived from Tuareg alliances with the French.[76] For their part, the Tuareg, especially the Ifoghas, maintained a narrative of betrayal of the "whites" (Tuareg) by the "blacks" (Bambara and Songhai) as independence approached. Tuareg political elites had not wanted to be part of a black African-dominated nation-state, seeing the blacks as without honor and given to theft and deceit. The "blacks," therefore, looked back on the colonial era as a nightmare, while the "whites" considered the colonial era a golden age. In part because of the desire of the Tuareg political leadership not to be part of a black African independent nation, they flirted with French irredentist schemes like the OCRS or French Saharan Africa (AFS), which will be discussed further below, even if such schemes would mean the Tuareg would remain under some form of continued French influence.[77] These competing nationalisms, Tuareg and Malian, will animate the Tuareg insurrection of 2012, as we shall see, with the Tuareg still seeking an independent state and many Malians still believing the Tuareg are allied with the French.

French Irredentist Schemes to Retain Influence in the Sahara

The French had a difficult time with decolonization. The loss of their once vast colonial empire, including their African territories, served as a painful reminder of the fact that, despite having emerged on the winning side after World War II, they, like Britain, had forever lost their great power status. But with both the US and the Soviet Union supporting decolonization in Africa and Asia in the post-war period, France had no realistic choice but to give up its colonies. One manifestation of France's struggle to face decolonization in Africa was the way its presence lingered

75 Hall, 2011, p. 273; Lecocq, 2010, pp. 41–2, 69. As we will see, chronically low voter turnouts will weaken democratic reform and damage the legitimacy of elected government in the period after the pro-democracy coup of 1991.

76 Hall, 2011, pp. 272–3.

77 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 102–4, 106.

even after 1960, especially in North and West Africa. In Niger, French colonial commandants remained at their posts in the Nigerien Sahara to administer the OCRS. In Mauritania, French troops remained to protect the newly independent nation against pro-Moroccan Mauritanian fighters who supported Morocco's irredentist claims. In Mali, France hung on to its northern bases, including Tessalit, to support its war against the Algerian independence movement. French forces lingered in the Malian north until 1961, even after Malian independence in September of 1960. And of course in Algeria the French dug in and tried to hold on to that territory despite acquiescing to the loss of almost all of their other African colonies in 1960. French President Charles De Gaulle staked his career and his reputation on a failed effort to hold on to French Algeria, an effort that ultimately collapsed in 1962.[78]

In addition to these cases of lingering French presence, a reflection of a sort of national state of denial over giving up its colonies, the French government pursued two irredentist schemes in the Sahara that would have preserved a considerable measure of French power and influence, if not actual sovereignty, possibly for a long time after 1960. One of these schemes was the *Organisation commune des régions sahariènnes* (OCRS), originally an economic and development zone, but with considerable political implications. The other was called French Saharan Africa, an entity that surfaced in a proposal made in the French national parliament as well as in the parliament of the French Union to separate the Saharan regions of French West Africa, French Central Africa, and Algeria, forming a new territory called *Afrique Sahariénne Française* (ASF).[79] Unlike the OCRS, which was to be administered as a development zone whose territories remained attached administratively to the colonies or to the independent nations to which they pertained, the ASF was to remain under French sovereignty. French political interest in these irredentist schemes only increased when oil was discovered in the Algerian Sahara in 1956.[80]

African reactions to the proposed schemes followed predictably along ethnic lines. The Tuareg and Bidan tribes of the Algerian and Malian Sahara felt the schemes, especially the ORCS, could serve as a vehicle for their nationalist aspirations, particularly if the organization were to include political as well as economic implications.[81] A key supporter of the OCRS was Muhammad Mahmoud Ould Cheikh, of the Berabish, a Bidan federation of the Malian Sahara, who was informally known as the "Qadi of Timbuktu." Ould Cheikh not only supported continued French rule in the Sahara, he felt Timbuktu and the Niger bend area should be included as part of the Sahara. He insisted the inhabitants of the Sahara

78 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 171–2.

79 Hall, 2011, p. 299.

80 Hall, 2011, p. 299. The first well came in at Hassi Messoud in February 1956. This strike was soon followed by the discovery of natural gas at Hassi R'mel (Lecocq, 2010, p. 49).

81 ICG Africa Report No. 189. 2012, p. 2.

were white, not black, and had their own separate culture. Ould Cheikh led the campaign for the OCRS, especially the inclusion of the Niger bend in it, traveling across the region to promote the plan among his Bidan and Tuareg supporters. In reality, the OCRS was as much a plan by French oil interests to hold onto access to the oil-rich Sahara as it was a Tuareg political ploy to hold onto their perceived homeland.[82] Not surprisingly, black African political elites in the Sahelian colonies were bitterly opposed to the OCRS. Soudanese (Malian) leadership was particularly hostile to the OCRS, fearing loss of control, economic or political, over any future territory they might stand to gain and over any mineral riches these territories might contain. Soudanese representatives in the French Chamber of Deputies accused supporters of the OCRS of engaging in racist policies, pitting the Saharans against the southern Soudanese population in order to make the OCRS a political territory, not just an economic zone. Mauritania, for its part, resisted calls from its pro-French factions to join the OCRS and from its pro-Moroccan factions to support Moroccan irredentist claims. The French attempted to use Tuareg and Arab reluctance to submit to black rule as an excuse to forestall decolonization and to retain a measure of control over the promising hydrocarbon sector emerging in the Sahara.[83]

Both the OCRS and ASF failed, largely in the face of solid opposition to the schemes by the leaders of pro-independence parties in the Sahelian colonies, especially Mauritania and the French Soudan. The OCRS was finally abandoned altogether by French policymakers after Algeria won its independence in 1962. But Tuareg and Bidan support for the schemes represent an early manifestation of the nationalist aspirations of these Saharan peoples. It also highlights the lingering bitterness on the part of both Saharan and Sahelian populations over the legacy of racism and slavery and the disagreements regarding who should have the right to rule whom. This legacy of inter-ethnic rivalry and bitterness continues to be a factor in the recent insurgencies in Mali and their spillover impact on countries like Niger and Mauritania. Likewise, the lure of known mineral wealth in Algeria and hoped-for hydrocarbon riches in Mali continues to raise the stakes in ongoing struggles over Saharan independence and/or autonomy.[84]

Malian Support for the Algerian War of Independence

Modibo Keita and the US-RDA were strong supporters of the Algerian struggle for independence from French rule. The Algerian National Liberation Army (ALN) set up base camps in the northern Soudan and expanded them after Malian independence. The ALN recruited widely among Malian Tamasheq and Bidan. From February 1961, an ALN

82 Humphreys, Marcartan and Habaye ag Mohamed. "Senegal and Mali," in Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (eds) *Understanding Civil War. Volume 1: Africa*. Washington DC: The World Bank, 2005, p. 254, n. 37.

83 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 50, 54–5, 59, 63.

84 Hall, 2011, p. 299.

base trained Algerian independence fighters near Tessalit. Other Algerian camps opened in Gao, Kidal, and Aguelhoc. Algeria's current president Abdelaziz Bouteflika was the ALN commander in northern Mali. Revolutionary theorist and writer Franz Fanon also served in northern Mali as an ALN commander, serving as liaison with the Malian government. He and other National Liberation Front (NLF) leaders were given Malian passports.[85] Yet at the same time, Mali allowed the French to use the small military airbase at Tessalit in the 1950s, even after Malian independence in 1960. The French improved Tessalit's runways and French forces increased in number at Tessalit in the late 1950s to help mount air support for their resistance to the Algerian independence struggle. From 1957 to 1961, about 150 French aviation personnel were stationed at Tessalit. In addition to Tessalit, three other military bases in northern Mali remained in French hands.[86] This situation, with troops and personnel of forces on both sides of the Algerian war of independence stationed on Malian soil at the same time, is a reflection of the complicated nature of the decolonization process. Keita and his US-RDA colleagues wanted to support the Algerian NLF, seeing its members as comrades in the struggle for independence from French rule. Yet until 1960, the French Soudan was still under direct French rule. And even after that Mali was not strong enough to force all French forces to withdraw immediately and cease their hostilities against the Algerian rebels. More will be said about the Algerian war of independence below.

The Post-independence Period: State Building in North and West Africa

Building the Malian State

As discussed above, the notion of a Malian state had had little time to gel among the political elite of the French Soudan. The most important pro-independence party, Modibo Keita's US-RDA, had promoted the formation of a West African federation as part of its platform of unity of the former colonies of French West Africa (AOF). That vision faded, however, and when independence finally came in 1960, it was on the basis of a truncated Malian nation-state that did not even include the entire former French Soudan.[87] Further, voter turnouts had been chronically low in elections during the last years of the French Soudan, especially in the rural areas, and political parties, as we understand them, were only functioning effectively in the cities.[88] Broadly speaking, the post-colonial state followed the colonial model in many respects. Like the colonial state, the post-colonial state was secular but

85 Scheele, 2012a, p. 75 n. 32; Lecocq 2010, p. 174.

86 Hirsch, Afua, 2013a, "Tessalit assumes vital importance in Mali's struggle against Islamist rebels," *Guardian Africa Network.* February 4, 2013, p. 2; Scheele, 2012a, pp. 90–91; Lecocq, 2010, p. 174.

87 Portions of northwestern Soudan were transferred to Mauritania in the 1940s and Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso, was also removed from the Soudan administratively by the French to create a separate territory.

88 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 41, 69.

Map 1.2 Mali

Credit: Max Rinkel

respectful of the role of Islam.[89] Also like the colonial state, the post-colonial state was chronically short of trained administrators, especially in remote regions like the north, so it relied on local chiefs to assist with administrative duties.[90] The most important political factions were the school teachers, the *anciens combatants*—soldiers who had fought for France during World War II—and the traditional chiefs. The school teachers had been educated in French language and political culture, and they represented the highest level to which educated Africans were allowed to rise in the colonial administration. But they were the sector most imbued with

89 Le Vine, Victor. "Mali: Accommodation or Coexistence?" in William F.S. Miles (ed.) *Political Islam in West Africa: State-Society Relations Transformed*. London: Lynne Rienner, 2007, p. 86.

90 Lecocq, 2010, p. 146.

French political ideology, including elements of parliamentary democracy and socialism. French education was central to the creation of a new Malian political class. And it was this political class that determined the nature of the new Malian state. The chiefs, on the other hand, had a much more traditional outlook. For the most part, they were not influenced by French political and cultural ideals, though the French had relied upon them to bolster colonial rule and legitimacy in the Soudan. The teachers vied with the chiefs during the decolonization period in creating new political institutions for the soon-to-be independent Malian state. It was the teachers who prevailed, especially after demobilized *combatants* returned to the Soudan and sided with them. The teachers, like Modibo Keita, who had served as a school teacher in Timbuktu, therefore, formed the new Malian state, but eventually the soldiers took over in military coups, not only in Mali, but in several West African post-independence states.[91]

Possibly the most serious problem facing the new Malian state was what to do about the restive northern regions. Originally northern Mali was administratively divided into two regions, Timbuktu and Gao. Between them they included the Adagh, the Azawad, and the Niger bend area. The biggest single issue confronting Mali's relations with its northern regions was that the traditionally nomadic Tamasheq and Bidan did not want to be part of the Malian state, preferring an independent state of their own or even some form of continued French rule. The Tamasheq and Bidan, at least much of their leadership, did not want to be under the rule of a black African-dominated Malian state because of their notions of race and history. Hall argues that race was, and to a certain extent still is, at the core of the relationship between the Malian state and the Tamasheq and Bidan populations in the north.[92] Many Malians believe the French put the social divide into the heads of the Tamasheq and Bidan in order to win support among Saharan peoples for their irredentist schemes. A woman from Gao paraphrased what, in the Malian imagination, the French must have told the Tamasheq, saying, "In all the world the whites command the blacks. Only in Mali do the blacks command the whites." By this statement she was saying the French had fanned the flames of racial hatred in order to persuade the Tamasheq and Bidan to reject Malian rule so the French could pursue their interests in retaining some measure of control of the oil-rich Sahara.[93]

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91 Lecocq, 2010, p. 36; Lecocq, 2005, p. 53. In Mali, for example, the civilian regime of President Modibo Keita was overthrown in 1968 by a military coup led by then-Lieutenant Moussa Traoré.

92 Hall, 2011, pp. 317–18.

93 Interview 108, Part 1. Hall and Lecocq, however, both argue that the racial views of the Tamasheq and Bidan, though they may have been encouraged by the French colonial administration, go back way before the colonial period and are tied to justification of the Arab-run trans-Saharan slave trade that thrived from ancient times until the nineteenth century.

The Keita regime was motivated in its relations with the north by resentment over the racial prejudices of the nomads, epitomized by the enslavement of black populations by the Tamasheq and Bidan nobles. As mentioned above, Modibo Keita made elimination of slavery a key basis of policy in the north after independence.[94] The US-RDA actively sought electoral support among the servile *bellah-iklan*, and support associations of former slaves sprang up in the Niger bend area and in Niger.[95] While this policy may seem just and long overdue to us, it seemed unjust to the nomads and emblematic of what they perceived as an attempt by the Keita regime to destroy their livelihood and culture. Additional aspects of the regime's northern policy, some of which do not seem so enlightened and progressive, were also regarded by the Tamasheq and Bidan as hostile to their interests. First, there was an attempt by the Keita regime to sedentarize the nomads by forcing them to farm. Northern noble groups opposed this policy, seeing farming as a demeaning occupation fit only for servile peoples. While some results were achieved in this sedentarization effort, it was largely a failure, in part because of declining rainfall. The policy was subsequently abandoned by the Traoré regime that seized power in Mali in 1968.[96] Keita wanted to integrate the Kel Tamasheq and the Bidan into the rest of Mali in order to create a single Malian nationality speaking Bambara. To this end, Keita promoted the *brassage***,** inter-ethnic marriage, in the north. The Keita regime also attempted a policy of "Mandefication" of the north by trying to impose the majority Mande (Bambara and Mandinka) language and culture on the nomads. To this end the speaking of Tamasheq was banned at state-operated schools. The regime also resorted to *Service Civique,* a form of forced labor, to build public buildings and to instill a work ethic among the nomads. This policy led to much resentment, partly because of memory of the forced labor demands made by the French, and partly because of Tamasheq and Bidan notions of "honorable" work, which did not include construction or farming.[97] It is partially due to such policies that the Tamasheq and Bidan have been so prone to insurgency since independence.

The First Tuareg Insurgency

The woman from Gao cited above counted off, with a touch of weary resignation in her voice, the list of Tuareg rebellions: 1957, 1962, 1990, 2006, and, most recently, 2012.[98] By insurgency I mean "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed

94 Hall, 2011, p. 209.

95 Lecocq, 2010, p. 108. These former slave associations were called Temedt in Mali and Timidra in Niger.

96 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 56, 164.

97 Interview 108, Part 1; Lecocq, 2010, pp. 136, 156, 158.

98 Interview 108, Part 1. Interview 107, Part 2.

conflict."[99] By extension, a movement that aims at the liberation of part of a state would be overthrowing the government in that limited territory. From the military perspective, the problem would be the same. Most of the Tuareg insurgencies focused on the liberation of part of the state of Mali, usually the Adagh or the Azawad. Only the 2012 insurgency, and then only part of it, claimed as its goal the overthrow of the Malian state entirely. The 1957 rebellion was against the French, who then still ruled the French Soudan, the future Mali Republic. I will begin my discussion with the first Tuareg insurgency against the newly independent Malian government, the so-called *Alfellaga*, which lasted from May 1962 to August 1964 and was led by members of the Ifoghas confederacy and was limited to Adrar des Ifoghas (Adagh).[100] The main cause of the *Alfellaga* was a Tuareg nationalism that was growing in the face of what they saw as a rival Malian nationalism, in which the Tuareg did not want to participate. In the early 1960s, the Malian government tried to reduce or end the political power of the Tuareg and Bidan chiefs in the northern regions of Mali, which they saw as a relic of colonial era privilege. The government also tried to free the *bellah-iklan* and to regulate the movement of herds of livestock, especially cattle, across borders.[101] The Tuareg perceived all of these government initiatives as detrimental to their political agenda and to their culture and livelihood. Specifically, the Kel Adagh, the people of the Adrar des Ifoghas, regarded a cattle tax and customs duties imposed in February 1962, as well as the creation of the Malian franc to curtail illegal exports, especially cattle, as hurtful to their interests. Their main export was cattle, many of which they sent to the oasis towns of the Algerian Touat in exchange for commodities.[102] Besides the heavy taxes and customs duties and mistreatment by police in the enforcement of such measures, the Kel Adagh were discontent for social and cultural reasons. Seeing themselves as "white" nomads, they refused to submit to rule by "black" farmers and refused the concept of equality implicit in the Malian ideal of citizenship. They were against the Keita regime because they felt they should never have been made part of Mali. They felt deceived by all parties: the French, the Keita administration, and the Algerian NLF who had recruited them to fight for Algerian independence and then did little to help them after independence was achieved.[103] The depth of the animosity between the combatant factions is evident in statements by the factions' leaders. Lecocq cites in his 2002 Ph.D. dissertation the declaration of a rebel *Alfellaga* leader captured in 1963:

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99 *The U.S. Army–Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual.* University of Chicago Press, 2007, pp. 3–24, Glossary, p. 5.

100 Grémont et al. 2004, p. 34.Seeley, 2001, p. 505; Lecocq, 2010, p. 25; Interview 107, Part 2; Interview 111 (Group interview, legal experts on Islamic and secular law) Part 1.

101 Hall, 2011, p. 319.

102 Lecocq, 2010, p. 165.

103 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 176, 179–80, 188; Lecocq, 2005, p. 53.

> We nomads of the white race can neither conceive nor accept to be commanded by blacks whom we always had as servants and slaves … . We Ifoghas do not accept or conceive of the equality between races and men Mali wants to impose on us, starting with taking our imghad and bellah away from us.[104]

For his part, Malian President Modibo Keita was very clear about his intentions in dealing with the Tuareg insurgency. His slogan was *On ne négocie pas avec les bandits armés*.[105]

The *Alfellaga* began when the deposed *amenokal* (traditional ruler) of the Ifoghas, Zeyd ag Attaher, gathered to him supporters who felt the Adagh should never have been part of Mali. The rebellion started with scarcely a dozen *ifulagen*, as the rebels were called, gathered around Zeyd ag Attaher. Lecocq says the *ifulagen* never exceeded 250 men. They were armed with cheap World War II era rifles, including Mausers and Mannlichers. A lively trade in such weapons had persisted in Algeria since the war. The *ifulagen* fighters used camels because they were more mobile than the Malian army's motorized forces, which were limited to the wadis and to open terrain. They raided neighboring peoples for camels and captured equipment from the Malian army. Typical *ifulagen* raids consisted of attacks on camel herds or on fixed army posts, after which they retreated across the nearby Algerian border. The recently independent NLF government of Algeria unofficially supported the rebels, allowing them to take refuge on Algerian territory and to treat their wounded there.[106] Algeria supported the Malian rebels to a limited extent because of its interest in the possibility of oil and gas reserves in the Malian north.[107] The Malians deployed, in addition to motorized units, air units and special forces called *Groupes Nomade d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie* (GNIG), which were specially formed for the northern conflict. These GNIG units, numbering around 50 men each, included former colonial *goum* troops (camel-mounted military police) from Timbuktu and the Adagh. Up to half of Mali's total forces were deployed in the initial phase of the *Alfellaga*. But despite this massive deployment, Mali could not bring the rebellion to an end. Rough terrain that was harmful to the vehicles and bad logistics, especially in terms of fuel and water, hampered Malian efforts. By August 1963, it had become clear motorized units and GNIG special forces were not going to be adequate to defeat the insurgents. Mali then sent its regular forces from the south.[108]

The entry of Mali's regular forces into the conflict marked the end of the first phase of the *Alfellaga*. The second phase, after August 1963, featured attacks on Tamasheq civilians by regular forces. Wells were poisoned, cattle killed, women raped and killed, and random executions of civilians were carried out. Some *goum*

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104 Lecocq, 2002. "That Desert … " p. 74, cited in Hall, 2010, p. 319.
105 Diakite, M. 2013, p. 1.
106 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 191–8.
107 Diakite, M. 2013, p. 1.
108 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 198–200, 207.

troops of northern origin became so disgusted with these tactics they deserted and joined the rebels. But the tactics proved effective, and the rebellion was crushed with "unforgettable brutality … "[109] Northeastern Mali, including what is today the Région of Kidal, was placed under martial law. The commandant of the *Cercle* of Kidal, Capt. Diby Sillas Diarra, became known as the "butcher" of Kidal for his singular record of brutality visited mainly on civilians. But the *ifulagen* still remained capable of offensive actions. They raided Tessalit and captured significant numbers of weapons on January 18, 1964. These weapons were used in a successful ambush of Malian forces at Tin Tedjnouten Pass, an action regarded as a significant rebel victory. But by February 1964 the advantage had tipped in favor of the Malians, after an agreement between the Malian and Algerian governments allowed Malian forces the right of hot pursuit of fleeing rebels into Algerian territory. This agreement made it clear to the *ifulagen* no further Algerian support would be forthcoming.[110] The rebels were defeated, trapped between the Malian and Algerian armies. Ultimately, lack of unity had weakened the 1962–64 rebellion. Intallah ag Attaher, amenokal of the Ifoghas confederacy, favored peace with Mali, while his brother and former amenokal Zeyd favored revolt. Intallah came to terms with the Malian government after Zeyd was captured and imprisoned at the Saharan salt mines of Taodeni.[111] Many Malian Tuaregs, especially civilians, fled to Algeria to escape persecution by the Malian forces. Despite the perceived betrayal of the Tuareg nationalist cause, Algeria sheltered and gave minor administrative posts to fleeing *Alfellaga* leaders. Algeria's leaders thought the former rebel leaders might be useful later.[112] The failure of the *Alfellaga* and especially the memory of the cruel treatment of Tuareg civilians by Malian army personnel left a legacy of bitterness that continues to this day among Malian Tuareg. Lecocq discusses the term *egha*, which he defines as hatred and pain of powerlessness and desire for revenge for any wrong committed. He argues that *egha* over the *Alfellaga* and the subsequent abuse during the drought years of the 1970s and 1980s extends to all of Tuareg society, not just the Ifoghas. This *egha* was a debt contracted between the whole of Tamasheq society and the Malian state, a debt that could only be paid in violence.[113]

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109 Morgan, 2012, p. 1; Lecocq, 2010, p. 207; Lecocq, 2005, p. 53.

110 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 201–2, 208, 213; Interview 111, Part 1.

111 Morgan, 2012, p. 4. Intallah ag Attaher was still living as late as 2011 as the shadowy power or *eminence grise* of the Ifoghas (Interview 114 [Government official who has toured north of Mali extensively on official business] Part 1).

112 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 210, 273. This sheltering of Tuareg rebel leaders by the Algerian NLF government is reminiscent of the way Pakistan, despite its "alliance" with the US in the GWOT, persists in sheltering Taliban leaders on its territory.

113 Lecocq, 2010, p. 269.

The Droughts of the 1970s and 1980s and Their Impact on the Tuareg

Before the Tuareg had recovered from the brutalities inflicted on them as a result of the *Alfellaga* insurgency, they were visited by yet another plague, this time droughts of Biblical proportions. Prior to the devastating droughts of the 1970s and 1980s the Tamasheq lived in the wadis of northern Mali with their herds. They came south seasonally to the Niger bend to sell hides, meat, and dairy products, then returned to the desert.[114] As such, they were participating in a centuries-old economic and cultural pattern of the Sahara-Sahel region featuring the sale of products produced by different ethnic groups with specializations in different livelihoods. The Fulbe produced cattle and dairy, the Bozo and Somono produced dried fish, the Marka produced cash crops like rice, and the Bambara produced millet and cotton. This practice of inter-ethnic dependence historically fostered a climate of tolerance and cooperation among potentially hostile ethnic groups living in proximity to each other. The inter-dependent economy, or, in the words of Charles Grémont, the "complementarity of economies," had been a feature of the Malian Sahel region since the advent of the earliest known towns of the Inland Niger Delta area, such as Jenne, which was founded in the first millennium BC.[115] The Tuareg too participated in this commercial economy, if not in the spirit of tolerance and inter-ethnic cooperation that accompanied it. The drought years began in the 1960s, reaching a peak in 1973–1974. The Tuareg lost their means of subsistence, their animals. The Songhai and the Fulbe also lost their herds in 1973, but they recovered more easily because they relied partially on agriculture and town-based commerce. The Tuareg began slowly re-building their herds, but another drought struck in 1984.[116] The droughts of the 1970s and 1980s ultimately destroyed Tamasheq herds, wiping out decades of accumulated capital.[117]

The destruction of the pastoral economy of northern Mali was nearly total. The camel herds of the Kel Adagh, for example, had not yet recovered from the *Alfellaga* when the drought years began. Those animals spared by the droughts of the 1970s were destroyed by a return to near drought conditions in the early 1980s, culminating in 1984. Livestock losses in the mid-1970s were around 80 percent. The human toll was also high. Nomads who lost their herds were forced into the towns to seek work and aid. NGOs attempted to set up displaced persons camps, but they were caught unprepared and were quickly overwhelmed. Aid agencies estimated deaths linked to drought conditions in the 70s and 80s to be in the hundreds of thousands. Many other Tuareg left the Adagh and the Azawad

114 Interview 108, Part 1.

115 Ehret, 2002, p. 231; Grémont et al. 2004, p. 84.

116 Lode, Kåre, 2002a, "Mali's peace process: Context, analysis & evaluation" *Accord: Owning the Process, Public Participation in Peacemaking.* 2002. p. 3; Interview 111, Part 1.

117 Hall, 2011, p. 320; Lecocq, 2010, p. 233.

without planning to return.[118] Beyond the physical damage associated with the droughts, there was also widespread social and cultural damage. Many Tamasheq turned away from the pastoral economy and towards wage earning, sometimes with the same NGOs who were trying, often with little success, to help them. The years 1968 to 1990, the tenure of the regime of President Moussa Traoré, saw major social and cultural change. Tamasheq society changed from rural to urban, from "pastoral household self-sufficiency and direct exchange of a limited range of goods" to wage labor and consumerism, and from a "coherent" regional base to a "scattered diaspora of community pockets around West Africa, the Maghreb, and Europe." Spread over two decades, drought conditions forced many Kel Adagh and other Tuareg to flee their homelands. They took refuge in Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso.[119]

The terrible conditions caused by the droughts were exacerbated by the fact that the Traoré regime largely ignored the north, undertaking little infrastructural or social investment in the two northern regions.[120] Many of the Tamasheq who stayed in camps in northern Mali died, especially children. In addition to the Traoré regime's neglect of infrastructural and commercial development, much relief aid supplied by NGOs and the international community was embezzled by corrupt officials. Conditions got so bad that the Traoré regime was later accused of intentionally mishandling relief funds and supplies as part of a "final solution" to the Tuareg problem.[121] Thus, to the anger and bitterness caused by the memory of the *Alfellaga* was added Tuareg discontent and simmering outrage over the systematic marginalization of the northern regions by the Traoré regime and the mishandling and misappropriation of relief aid.[122] This anger, humiliation, and sense of powerlessness contributed to the debt of *egha* that had accrued to the Kel Tamasheq as a result of the *Alfellaga*. This debt was redeemed in violence in the second round of Tuareg and Bidan insurgencies in the 1990s.

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118 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 233, 234, 238. I was in Mali during the rainy season of 1984. Though it seemed like a lot of rain to me—and I am from Missouri where we are not unfamiliar with rain—I was told the accumulation was scarcely half that of a normal Malian rainy season. That was in Bamako; drought was much worse in the Sahel and Sahara.

119 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 227–8, 235, 239; Morgan, 2012, p.1; Scheele, 2012a, p. 114; Lecocq, 2010, p. 235.

120 "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End: Peacemaking by Consensus in Mali," Reprinted from *People Building Peace: 35 Inspiring Stories from Around the World*, published by the European Centre for Conflict Prevention. ND. p. 1 (last accessed February 17, 2014); Hall, 2011, p. 321. Kidal had been part of the Region of Gao. It was made a separate region after the Tuareg rebellion of 1990–1996.

121 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 236–7.

122 Sperl, Stefan, "International refugee aid and social change in northern Mali" *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 21 (1 and 2), 2002, p. 148; Lode, 2002a, p. 2.

The Teshumara and Tenekra

The years 1968 to 1990, which roughly correspond with the term of the administration of Mali's second president Moussa Traoré, form the main period of the *Teshumara* and *Tenekra* movements, though their roots go back further. The term *Teshumara* derives ultimately from the French word *chômage*, which means unemployment. The Tamasheq term *Teshumara* refers to the long period of exile due to war and drought during which many Tuareg were chronically out of work. It began as an economic subculture among Tuaregs living mainly in Algeria and Libya, but it lasted so long that it became a culture of its own and, ultimately, a preparation for another insurgency. The *Tenekra*, which will be discussed further below, is a related movement that represented the political manifestations of the *Teshumara* movement.[123] Lecocq discusses two main migrations, or periods of exodus, of the Malian Tuareg. The first took place in the 1950s during the decolonization period. It started with a movement of Malian Tuaregs to Mecca under the leadership of Muhammad Ali ag Attaher, who founded a small Tuareg community there and at other stages along the way. A primary motivation for this first exodus was the desire of many Tuareg not to live in a country ruled by blacks. In the Muhammad Ali's own words:

> I do not understand how you could accept from France that you should be incorporated with the idolatrous blacks of Mali. I inform you that in my capacity as representative … of our country before my emigration, I never accepted that the government of Mali be placed above us and with whom we share no religion or customs or parentage, that he should be raised [above us] by French colonialism … . I have written to the president of their government, Modibo Keita, informing him that I do not agree to live in this huge tumult … if he does not leave our country to rule over itself.[124]

The Tamasheq have always traveled seasonally with their herds, sometimes over considerable distances and frequently across international borders. Some Tamasheq historically also journeyed to Mecca for pilgrimage. Before the advent of air travel, West Africans generally made the pilgrimage by land. The main route passed through Chad, Sudan, and Egypt. The stages were Gao, Niamey, N'djamena (then Ft. Lamy), Khartoum, Cairo, and then on to the Kingdom.[125] Pilgrims would stop and work at various stages to earn money, as it was not uncommon for the *hajj* to take seven to 10 years. Sometimes pilgrims would stop and settle permanently at one of the stages, either on the way to Arabia or on the way back. They would establish marriage alliances with local women, and sometimes they would make

123 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 227, 228–30.

124 Hall, 2011, p. 307.

125 Interview 108, Part 1, Alternate routes included Bamako to Dakar, then by boat to Morocco or Egypt and Gao, Tamanrasset, Tangiers, then by boat to Algiers and Mecca.

use of their family connections back home to mount commercial ventures. As a result, pockets of Malians speaking Malian languages including Tamasheq and Koroboro, along with pockets of other West Africans appeared at stages along the route.[126] The migration of Tamasheq during the first exodus of the *Teshumara* passed through these communities on their way to Mecca.

The second exodus took place during the 1960s; Tuareg from the Adagh and Azawad fled to Algeria. Some fled for the same reasons that propelled the first exodus, not wanting to be under Malian (black) rule, while others fled during and after the *Alfellaga*. Some stayed in the Algeria borderlands and in nearby commercial cities in Touat and Hoggar. Others found work at French atomic bomb testing sites, where the French were hesitant to hire Arabs from northern Algeria, fearing that such workers could include NLF infiltrators. Later refugees reckoned that the core of the *Teshumara* and *Tenekra* was based on the "children of 1963," the orphans of the *Alfellaga*. Some of these orphaned children settled in Algeria with relatives, but some 400 stayed behind in boarding schools set up by the Keita regime in Kidal. Still others settled in towns of the West African Sahel like Bamako and Wagadugu and even along the coast in such cities as Lome, Lagos, and Accra.[127] Wherever the *ishumar* refugees settled in what became the Tuareg diaspora, they typically clung to small communities of their own kin and ethnic group, but they frequently established marriage alliances with local families.

One of the first destinations of the *ishumar* was the Algerian city of Tamanrasset in the Hoggar, whence many of the leaders of the *Alfellaga* fled.[128] Others wound up in Djanet to the east or in Libyan cities like Ghadames near where Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria all meet.[129] Malian Tuareg continued to join the *Teshumara* during the Traoré years, as the highly centralized Traoré regime led to still further marginalization of the northern Tamasheq and Bidan, who did not fit into the government's limited development plans.[130] The dislocations of the *Teshumara* led to social and economic changes in *ishumar* life, as well as to cultural and political expression. The social worldview of the Tamasheq was challenged in exile. In terms of the kinds of work the exiles found, their occupational choices tended to reflect their traditional labor ethic and their concept of what constituted honorable professions, especially pastoralism and caravan trade. Work as car and

126 Interview 108, Part 1, Travel patterns similar to this, including working at the stages along the way to earn money to keep going, also characterize the routes of labor migrants from West Africa trying to get to North Africa and then, if possible, to Europe.

127 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 231, 255.

128 Badi, Dida. "Cultural Interaction and the Artisanal Economy in Tamanrasset" in James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 201.

129 Grémont et al. 2004, p. 34; Lecocq, 2010, pp. 241–2. Kel Tamasheq refugees from Mali went mostly to Tamanrasset, while refugees from Niger, also fleeing rule by black Africans, fled to Djanet. Both Malians and Nigeriens settled in Libya.

130 Lode, 2002a, p. 2.

truck drivers or mechanics was linked to their pastoral tradition, while smuggling was linked to their commercial tradition.[131] Many *ishumar* men, as we shall see, also got military training in exile, especially those who settled in Libya.[132] Forced to abandon traditional pastoralism, their sense of who they were was also called into question. Used to regarding themselves as lords in their own country and to considering themselves "white," as opposed to what they considered "black" Africans, in Libya they were seen as just more black African refugees. Among the Tuareg who relocated in West African cities the "black" Tamasheq, the *bellah-iklan*, were able to blend in better than the "white" Tamasheq. Nor was the nobility of the "white" Tamasheq recognized in the southern cities.[133]

One of the new forms of cultural expression to emerge from the *Teshumara* was a musical genre called *al-guitara* after the prominence of that instrument in it. *Al-guitara* emerged in the early years of the *Teshumara* among Tuareg exiles in Algeria and Libya. The genre was influenced by the revolutionary songs of the POLISARIO fighters young Tuareg exiles met either in the Saharan towns of Algeria or in the training camps of Libya. Soon Tuareg refugee garage bands were springing up in Algerian desert towns like Tamanrasset, playing borrowed guitars and deriving material for lyrics from stories of the *Alfellaga* and from the exile experience. The most famous of these Tuareg bands was Tinariwen, who burst onto the world music scene in the early 2000s, playing their electric guitars at the famous Festival in the Desert concerts of Essakane and Timbuktu. Besides POLISARIO revolutionary songs, Tinariwen listed as among its influences Ali Farka Toure, Jimi Hendricks, and Dire Straits.[134] In addition to bringing *Teshumara* culture to local and even international attention, the "desert blues" songs of Tinariwen and other *al-guitara* artists helped keep alive the tradition of suffering and betrayal associated with the *Alfellaga* and the experience of alienation and isolation associated with exile.[135]

The flight of Tamasheq and Bidan from Mali to Algeria and Libya, as well as to other diaspora destinations, continued into the early to mid-1980s, partly due to the return of drought conditions and partly because Libyan leader Mohamar Qadaffi began actively to recruit mercenaries among young Malian Tuareg. Some of these young men got military training and some fought in the service of Qadaffi in Chad, Sudan, and even the Levant; others fought alongside POLISARIO in the Western Sahara.[136] Eventually Qadaffi built a sizable force of mostly Malian Tuaregs under the command of Iyad al Ghali, a quixotic Ifoghas noble who went on to become

131 Grémont et al. 2004, p. 34.

132 Lode, 2002a, p. 3, 228, 243.

133 Lecocq, 2010, p. 255.

134 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 252–3. Essakane is located west of Timbuktu in the *Cercle* of Goundam. The concerts were moved to Timbuktu in 2010 because of security concerns, and cancelled altogether in 2012.

135 *ICG Africa Report* No. 189, 2012, p. 12, n. 88.

136 Lode, 2002a, p. 3.

a leading figure of the Tuareg insurgencies of the 1900s and 2000s.[137] About 200 *ishumar* volunteers preparing to fight in Palestine under Libyan passports received advanced training in heavy arms in Damascus. They were sent to Lebanon and integrated into Palestinian units. The *ishumar* battalion was ultimately shipped to Tunis in 1982, along with other Palestinian fighters, from where most of them returned to Libya.[138] In the process of all this training and actual combat, many Tuareg men gained valuable military skills, including, in some cases, the use of heavy weapons. This training would prove critical in the second Tuareg insurgency against the Malian government in the 1990s.

Decades of exile experience in Algeria and Libya, among other places, led to a *Teshumara* political culture among the *ishumar*.[139] The political manifestations of the *Teshumara* comprise what is called the *Tenekra*, a nationalist movement characterized by three elements: 1) the desire for a territorially based nation-state in northern Mali, 2) hatred of and desire for revenge against Mali (*egha*), and 3) socialism and secularism, some of which was probably learned in the schools established for orphaned Tuareg children by the Keita administration, and in Algeria and Libya under the secular-nationalist regimes of those countries.[140] Feelings of powerlessness towards Mali, and to a lesser extent Niger, united the Kel Tamasheq in exile. They felt they had been robbed of their honor and their livelihood as well as their possessions, and they owed an honor debt against the blacks of Mali. The *Tenekra* movement first began to take shape among Malian Tamasheq exiles in Algeria in the wake of the *Alfellaga*. The movement was founded in Algeria but part of it flourished in Libya as well as in pockets of Tuareg exiles in West African cities.[141] Several motivating factors led to the creation of the *Tenekra* political culture among the *ishumar*. First, drought had shattered Tamasheq society and economy. Second, there had been little international support for the Tamasheq cause during the *Alfellaga*; much of the world was just hoping for the success of the independent black nation-states. Third, there had been much mismanagement and outright corruption in the relief effort during the droughts. Fourth, the Algerian government periodically expelled *ishumar* communities from its territory. And fifth, they had faced discrimination as African refugees in Libya. The Tamasheq felt they had no external support (many believed Qadaffi had merely exploited them), no allies, and no resources.[142] By the late 1980s, veteran *ishumar* fighters began to return to Mali to cache weapons. *Ishumar* battalions were formed around Kidal, Menaka, and Gao. The goal of the *Tenekra* movement was to recreate the Tamasheq nation on liberated, independent territory. Iyad ag Ghali emerged as the

137 Interview 111, Part 1.
138 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 284–5.
139 *ICG Africa Report* 189, 2012, p. 3.
140 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 228–9.
141 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 268–9; 272–3, 280–81.
142 Lecocq, 2010, p. 262.

head of the Liberation Front of Northern Mali, a new group that grew out of the *Tenekra*. Its leaders toured northern Mali in the late 1980s to gather recruits.[143]

The examination of the *Teshumara* and *Tenekra* movements is relevant to us for two reasons. First, the extent and range of the *Teshumara* exile culture, including Mali, Algeria, Libya, Niger, and even parts of Nigeria, provides an illustration of the connectivity within the Sahara-Sahel region that is the focus of this book. Second, the experience of the *Teshumara* and the *Tenekra* led, as we will see, directly to the second Tuareg insurgency of 1990–1996.

Smuggling and Contraband in the Sahara

Smuggling in the Sahara is an outgrowth of the old trans-Saharan trade, and as such it is regarded as an honorable profession among Tamasheq and Arab traders.[144] After Algeria achieved independence in 1962, its subsidies on staple commodities, especially foodstuffs such as pasta, semolina, flour, and powdered milk, were the principal drivers of trade across the Algeria-Mali border and a critical component of the overall Saharan economy. The subsidies resulted in considerable price differentials between the state-controlled prices and those determined by market forces. Since the subsidies were intended to benefit Algerians, export of these commodities was banned. Indeed, all overland trade between Algeria and Mali was declared illegal by the Algerian government. Scheele has described the Algero-Malian border as the central Sahara's most important "natural" resource.[145] Similar subsidies on commodities in oil-rich Libya resulted in lucrative trade opportunities across the Libya-Niger border.[146] The Algerians removed their subsidies on commodities during the economic reforms of the 1970s-1990s. As a result, the focus of trans-border trade changed to contraband goods, as opposed to staple goods that are otherwise legal and beneficial. For example, cigarette smuggling took off in the 1980s.[147] All trade in the Sahara, whether in legal or illegal goods, is called *al-frud*. The commercial ethic reflects the fact that the artificial post-independence borders have made all trade illicit, but that the community reserves judgment on which goods it regards as honorable and which it regards as dishonorable.

Since around 2000, extreme and profitable contraband traffic in cocaine, labor migrants, and kidnapped Europeans has entered the mix of Saharan smuggling. As northern Africa expert Wolfram Lacher explains, "Contraband trade in licit goods, which developed across the region in previous decades, laid the institutional basis for the development of these high-profit activities."[148] The Algerians restored

143 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 259, 288, 292.
144 Lecocq, 2010, p. 234.
145 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 6, 95, 115.
146 Brachet 2012, p. 250.
147 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 104–7.
148 Lacher, 2012, p. 3.

subsidies on commodities like semolina, flour, couscous, and pasta in 2012, along with their traditional export ban on these items. But by then the trade in high-value contraband goods like drugs and labor migrants was too deeply ingrained to be abandoned. Also, most trans-border trade across the Algeria-Malian border was then in the hands of Malians, especially Tamasheq and Bidan, rather than Algerians. But Malian traders are commonly linked to Algerian traders by marriage alliances and/or employment.[149] As we will see, the vast profits that have been generated by the smuggling of extreme and high-value goods figured into the financing of the Islamist militias that took over Mali's three northern regions in 2012.

Conclusion

Throughout the post-independence period up to the pivotal year 1990, conditions in the Malian and Algerian Sahara did not appear to be leading towards the tumultuous events of 2012–2013, but some elements were there, and others were beginning to appear. But still others, especially radical Islam, were not visible on the horizon. Economically, according to Scheele, the Sahara was becoming "perhaps the fastest changing, most dynamic, and wealthiest region of the African continent." This somewhat surprising situation is due in large measure to the fact that much of the rest of the continent was still recovering from the "lost decade" of the 1980s when most of Africa showed negative economic growth. But it was also the result of genuine economic expansion in the Sahara due to several factors, including rapid urbanization; demographic growth, mostly from in-migration; and the exploitation of rich hydrocarbon deposits. To these economic assets add the burgeoning contraband trade, which was just then beginning to branch out into illegal drugs. Tamanrasset was chief among the Saharan boomtowns, illustrating two of the above phenomena, urban growth and in-migration. A center of regional administration and oil production, Tamanrasset's population jumped from 15,000 in 1976 to 180,000 in 2003, expanding tenfold in 30 years.[150] Such growth was clearly driven by in-migration. Besides northern Algerians seeking work in the hydrocarbon sector and Tamasheq exiles from Mali and Niger, large numbers of undocumented labor migrants gathered there, using the city as a springboard to get to the Mediterranean coast and ultimately to Europe. These were, of course temporary residents, but many stayed for years, working, saving money, and/or waiting for an opportunity. And when they moved on, they were quickly replaced by fresh migrants from Sahelian and coastal West Africa.[151]

While most of this economic growth was on the Algerian side, some of it spilled over into northern Mali. The northern regions began to attract a tourist clientele from Saudi who came to see the Tuareg cameleers. They enjoyed

149 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 95, 104.
150 Scheele and McDougall, 2012, p. 7.
151 Lecocq, 2010, p. 241.

seeing the Tuareg pastoral culture, imagining that their own pastoral tradition, now largely lost to many urban Saudi families, must have resembled it.[152] The notorious Pakistani nuclear scientist and proliferator Abdul Kader Khan, for example, built a large hotel in Timbuktu to cater to wealthy Saudi tourists and their families.[153] In addition, the above mentioned Festival in the Desert also attracted European tourists to Timbuktu. Aside from these bright spots, however, the rest of the picture of the Malian north and the other Sahelian countries was not so appealing. Approximately one million people lived in the northern regions of Mali in the 1990s, most of them Tuareg, including *bellah-iklan* and Songhai, but also including some Fulbe and Bidan.[154] Like the rest of Mali, much of this population lived by subsistence production and was at least partially dependent on foreign aid. The percentage of the overall Malian population with access to safe water was 61 percent, while that of neighboring Niger was 56 percent. The population below the poverty line for Mali was 64 percent, for Mauritania, 50 percent, and for Niger, 63 percent.[155] Also by 1990 corruption in Mali had become entrenched in the Traoré regime. During the 1980s, members of the Malian Assembly began to lose their popular electoral base and became increasingly tied to the party (UDPM) for financial support, rather than to a constituency. As a result, UDPM, once a genuine mass party, began to lose popular support itself. Corruption among high-ranking officials had begun to set in, affecting the integrity and popularity of the UDPM. Traoré's wife Mariam and certain political figures and members of the army staff began to behave in corrupt ways, peddling influence and indulging in nepotism and favoritism.[156] As we shall see, Malian corruption grew even more egregious under the democracy after 1991, but it had already gotten a good start during the last decade of the Traoré dictatorship.

Mali had also by 1990 achieved a reputation for ethnic and religious tolerance and moderation rather than extremism, especially compared to the Islamic extremism of Sudan, Iran, and Pakistan, for example. Mali's long tradition of ethnic tolerance was based on an economic interdependence on goods provided by members of different ethnic groups that practiced different economies, such as fishing, cattle herding, grain cultivation, etc.[157] This tradition of ethnic tolerance contributed to Mali's tolerant and moderate approach to Islam. Mali had seen little significant religious conflict since independence.[158] While Mali was 90–95 percent Muslim, Malian Islam was based largely on Sufi tradition,

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152 Lecocq, 2010, p. 88.

153 "Khan built hotel in Timbuktu," *The Times of India.* February 1, 2004.

154 "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End … " ND, p. 1.

155 World Factbook, 2003, Mali. Hilton foundation, p. 1.

156 Interview 109 (Malian World Bank staffer residing in Bamako).

157 Ehret, 2002: 228.

158 Stern, Willy. "Moderate Islam, African-style: Meet the beer-swilling Muslims of Mali." *The Weekly Standard*. Vol. 13, No. 44. August 4, 2008. p. 2; *Malian Experience*. 2000, p. 17.

which stressed the concept of individual spiritual development, rather than the aggressive proselytization of Islamic fundamentalism. Sufism, which dates from at least the eighteenth century in West Africa, also stresses the master-disciple relationship and veneration of past Sufi masters, or saints.[159] The Sufi brotherhoods have a reputation for resisting injustice, including social corruption, colonial rule, and post-independence tyranny. As a result, only the Sufi leaders have the moral authority to challenge the radical propaganda of the Islamists and terrorists.[160] Sufism also contributed strongly to the spread Islam in West Africa. Having been an elite faith for centuries, Islam became a popular mass movement in modern West Africa partly because of the compatibility of Sufism with aspects of traditional African spirituality, including veneration of persons with perceived mystical powers.[161] Numerous Malian Islamic organizations, many of them linked to Sufi brotherhoods, had been brought together under a government-sponsored umbrella group called the Malian Association for the Unity and Progress of Islam (AMUPI). The Traoré regime created it to bring disparate Islamic groups under some form of state influence.[162] Many Malian Qur'anic schools were co-ed, and imams, whether Sufi affiliated or not, generally preached peaceful Islam.[163] A radical Wahhabi strain of Islam appeared in Mali beginning in 1949, spread by returning students and pilgrims from Arabia and later bolstered by Saudi funding. The Wahhabi imams of Mali preached a Salafist ideology that rejected Sufism and the four schools of law. It also advanced a conservative social agenda that called for charity initiatives for the poor and the veiling and cloistering of women. The movement spread to several Malian cities, starting from Bamako. The Wahhabis of Mali kept a low profile after outbreaks of violence in the 1950s.[164] Despite continued Saudi support, they represent fewer than 2 percent of the mosques in Mali. Other foreign-inspired strains of radical Islamic Islam, such as Algeria's AQIM, Pakistan's Jama'at al-Tabligh (Dawa), and Nigeria's Boko Haram, had not yet significantly penetrated Mali.[165] But as we shall see, radical Islamist ideologies from the outside would soon be sinking roots in northern Mali.

The restive Tuareg, many of them still in exile, were about to embark on their second major insurgency of the post-independence period. By the late 1980s the Libyan and Algerian governments were finally starting to expel Tuareg refugees and fighters in the late 1980s. Many of these would return to Mali trained in desert

159 "Islam and Sufism in West Africa." *Seyfettin.* November 15, 2007. p. 2. (Last accessed February 17, 2014).

160 Wright, 2009, p. 2.

161 Harmon, 1988, passim; "Islam and Sufism in West Africa.", 2007, p. 2.

162 Schultz, 2007, p. 48; Le Vine 2007, p. 87.

163 Stern, 2008, pp. 2–3.

164 See Lansina Kaba *The Wahhabiyya: Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974.

165 Le Vine, 2007, p. 91, 92.

fighting and hostile to the Malian regime.[166] A new Malian Tuareg organization called the People's Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MPLA) had been formed in the 1980s in Libya.[167] And, ominously, memories of the "white/black" master/slave traditions were still causing tension among ethnic communities in Mali's northern regions. Bitter memories had kept these tensions alive, not only among the Tuareg exiles of the *Teshumara*, but also among the Songhai and *bellah-iklan* of the Niger bend area.[168] They were about to burst forth in a new Tuareg insurgency in the north that lasted from 1990 to 1996.

166 Lode, 2002a, p. 3.
167 "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End … " ND, p. 1.
168 *ICG Africa Report* 189, 2012, p. 2.

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Chapter 2
Algeria: Islam and State Building

The previous chapter focused largely on the Saharan reaches of Mali and its Algerian borderlands. This chapter will focus on Algeria from pre-colonial times, through the colonial and post-independence periods, up to 2010. It will concentrate on two aspects of the country's history, state building and the role of Islam. Analysis of Algerian state building will only focus on the highlights. First there will be a brief description of Algeria's on and off relationship with the Caliphate and the Ottoman Empire, then the chapter will cursorily examine Algerian resistance in the early colonial period, and aspects of the French-dominated state and society in the twentieth century, followed by a somewhat closer look at the Algerian War of Independence. Discussion of the post-independence state will focus on the tension between two conflicting visions for Algeria. The National Liberation Front's (FLN) vision of a secular-nationalist state apparatus with a socialist economy within a single-party political structure on the model of Nasser's Egypt will be contrasted with Algerian Islamists' vision of an Islamic state guided by shariah law. The Islamist vision was submerged and suppressed by the nationalist vision for the first 30 years of independence until it burst forth in the turbulent 1990s. The Islamists themselves, as we shall see, were divided between the relative moderates, who favored limited accommodation with the electoral process, and the extremists, who did not. The extremists were divided as well as to whether to support national as opposed to global jihad.

Analysis of Islam's role within the Algerian state and society will be examined in more depth. We will first discuss the role of "traditional" Islam, including Sufism and *maraboutism*, during the pre-colonial and early colonial periods. Then it will focus on the rise of "reformist," or political Islam, beginning in the early twentieth century and through the later colonial and post-independence periods, up to the pivotal years 1989–92. These years witnessed the ascendancy of radical Islam in Algeria in the form of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and its spectacular electoral successes. However, as we will see, that success led to a crackdown by the military government and then to the subsequent civil war, known as the *La sale guerre* (the Dirty War). The civil war saw the rise of a succession of violent jihadist-Salafist movements whose goal was to topple the FLN military government and establish an Islamist state. These groups included, besides the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and its military wing the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GCSP) and, ultimately the Qa'ida-affiliated group Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). As we will see, the transition from GSPC to AQIM was linked to a conflict within the GSPC over whether to focus on an Islamist state in Algeria or to become part

of the Qa'ida-led global jihad. Both the GSPC and AQIM ultimately expanded into the Algerian and Malian reaches of the Sahara in part because they were effectively driven out of their home base in northeastern Algeria by state security forces, partly because mainstream Algerian Muslims withdrew their support from the radicals as the civil war wound down, and also because they were drawn into the lucrative smuggling and trafficking networks of the Sahara and Sahel. I will argue that, for a time in the early 2000s, GSPC/AQIM may have lost its focus on Islamist ideology and building an Islamic state and evolved into what I shall call a "hybrid" group, as much focused on organized crime, such as contraband trafficking, drug smuggling, human trafficking, and kidnapping for ransom (as opposed to kidnapping for ideological reasons), as on jihad.

Historical Background

France colonized Algeria from 1830 to 1962. Three communities made up colonial Algeria. An Arabic-speaking population dominated the coastal urban centers such as Algiers and Oran. A French-speaking settler colony (the colons), eventually totaling more than a million settlers, controlled the fertile coastal plains. Berber-speaking Kabyle farmers dominated the mountain valleys beyond the coastal plain. The interaction of these three communities made up the history of the colonial period. The Arab and Tuareg peoples of the Saharan reaches of Algeria remained marginal to the colonial state until relatively late in the colonial period. Both the Arabs and the Kabyles were, and are, Muslims. The Arabs first arrived in the Maghreb in the late seventh century CE, pushed by the great wave of Islamic expansion that followed the career of the Prophet. Arab armies at the time of the Umayyad Caliphate established Islam in what became the modern state of Algeria by about 710. While Arab rule was fiercely resisted by the mainly Berber indigenous population, Islam was accepted and "became and remained the almost exclusively dominant religion of the region."[1] The subsequent Abbasid Caliphate maintained a tenuous hold at best on the Maghreb in medieval times. Rebellious Berbers continued to express resistance to Arab rule by adopting the Kharijite schism of Islam. Some Berber polities based at trading towns near the northern edge of the Sahara, such as Tahert and Siljilmasa, embraced the egalitarian doctrines of Kharijism as a statement of opposition to the pro-Caliphate Arabs. These Berber states, along with their Kharijite practices, eventually disappeared to be replaced with Sunni orthodoxy and Malikite law. A thoroughly Arabized population emerged in the coastal cities and plains, while Berber speech held fast until the present in the mountain valleys. Elements of the Kharijite tradition also lingered, giving Maghrebi Islam a certain heterodox hue. This tendency towards heterodoxy manifested itself in later pre-colonial times in the form of "popular

1 Willis, Michael. *The Islamist Challenge in Algeria: A Political History*. New York: New York University Press, 1996, p. 2.

Islam" in the region, which included Sufism and *maraboutism*, the veneration of "living saints" blessed with divine grace (*baraka*).[2] Sufis were divided into brotherhoods (*tariqa*), including the Tijaniyya, the only Sufi brotherhood founded and based in Africa, and the Qadiriyya, which was founded in medieval Iraq.[3]

The Sufi *tariqas*, with their networks of lodges (*zawiya*), the leaders of the lodges (*moqqadam*), and their initiates or adepts (*talibe*), served as intermediaries between local Maghrebi society and the succession of Muslim rulers that held sway up to and including the Ottoman *deys* and *beys* who ruled from their coastal strongholds. This rather political role for the Sufi brotherhoods was another distinguishing feature of Maghrebi Islam. Sufism in the Arab heartlands played a more quietist and often social role in society.[4] The political role of Sufism was even more pronounced in West African Islam, where sovereign emirates, as noted in Chapter 1, were founded by Sufi leaders of branches of the same brotherhoods that dominated in Algeria. Popular Islam, including Sufism and maraboutism, dominated Algerian religious life throughout most of the colonial period as well. Militant Sufi leaders led the resistance against French rule in the nineteenth century, as they had against the Ottomans. Abd al-Qadir, a leader of the Qadiriyya order and amir of the tribes of the western province of Oran, led a 15-year revolt against French rule that was finally defeated in 1847. During the time of his rebellion, he built and maintained what amounted to an independent Islamic Algerian state, expressing his specifically religious motivations for his resistance to the Christian French.[5]

The French colonial enterprise in Algeria doubled down under the Second Empire, 1852–1871, greatly expanding the number of settlers and land area of French settlement. Resistance to French rule continued under Islamic auspices, including a series of Mahdist figures and Sufi leaders (*shaykhs*). By the end of the nineteenth century, French authorities had compelled imams in the coastal towns and cities, such as Oran, Constantine, and the capital, Algiers, to cooperate rather than resist. In the rural areas where the French writ was weaker, membership in the Sufi brotherhoods rose because residents resented the collaboration of the urban "establishment" imams. Eventually, however, even the Sufi *tariqas* were brought under a measure of colonial control through the aggressive policies of rural colonial administrators, and popular Islam ceased to be the primary force in opposing French rule and in asserting Algeria's Muslim identity.[6]

Muslim intellectuals outside of the Sufi tradition began to be influential in the coastal cities in the early twentieth century. These intellectuals were influenced

2 Willis, 1996, p. 2

3 The Tijaniyya Brotherhood was founded by a Maghrebi divine named Ahmad al-Tijani, d. 1815. The mother house (*zawiya*) was located at Ain Mahdi in modern Algeria (Harmon, 1988).

4 Willis, 1996, p. 2.

5 Willis, 1996, p. 4.

6 Willis, 1996, pp. 5–8.

by the *salafiya* movement that emanated from late nineteenth-century Egypt. Like Algeria, Egypt was in the throes of occupation by a western power, Britain. The *salafiya* was a Muslim intellectual movement inspired by European occupation. Western occupation had resulted in a sense of moral and civilizational decline, as well as a feeling of inferiority among Muslims, whose once powerful territories had been so easily overrun by Western armies, beginning with Napoleon Bonaparte's occupation of Egypt in 1798. Perhaps the foremost exponent of Salafism was the Egyptian teacher and intellectual Muhammad Abduh. Abduh's reaction to the devastating cultural and emotional impact of Western occupation was to urge fellow Muslims to return to the "pure" undiluted Islam of the time of the Prophet and his companions, the forefathers (*salaf*) of the faith. But unlike earlier fundamentalist movements, such as the Arabian Wahhabiyya of the eighteenth century, Abduh argued that Islam should not be averse to borrowing selectively aspects of European technology and science, so long as these concepts could be divorced from Western ideologies. The ideas of Muhammad Abduh, through his disciple Rashid Rida (d. 1935), greatly influenced Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Abduh actually visited Algeria in 1903, touching off what has been called the "reformist" movement in Algeria, which was based on the ideas of Egyptian Salafis. One of the first important manifestations of reformist Islam in Algeria was the formation in 1931 of the Algerian Association of Muslim Ulema (AUMA) based in Constantine in the northeast. The association, led by Abdul Hamid ben Badis, rejected secularism, socialism, and maraboutism, including the Sufi brotherhoods, whom they accused of spreading superstition, and worse, standing between the individual believer and God.[7] With the rise of Salafist leaders like ben Badis, we see the beginnings of Islamism in Algeria. This reformist Islam was to take up the Muslim resistance to French rule, at least on the intellectual and cultural plane, during the remainder of the colonial period up to the 1950s, just as it was Algerian Islamism that was to challenge the secular-nationalist government of independent Algeria at the end of the twentieth century. Notwithstanding these intellectual traditions, many Algerians, especially the *assimilés*, though Muslim, became largely secular in outlook. For these ("assimilated" Algerians), Islam served primarily as an identity marker that distinguished the "Algerians" from the French settlers.

French Algeria, the Colons

The non-Muslim population of Algeria reached 1.12 million by 1947, nearly one tenth of the total. Most were French, but the colons also included Greeks, Italians, Armenians, Maltese, and others. Though many were of modest income, the colonial community dominated the elite sectors of society, including government, the military, key aspects of the economy, and the educational system. The French

7 Kepel, Gilles. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam.* New York: Belknap Press, 2002, pp. 161–2; Willis, 1996, p. 9.

settlers in Algiers lived in the airy seaside French Quarter, while Algerians, distinguished by Islam and Arabic speech, lived in the romanticized but crowded and squalid Casbah. Rural areas were similarly segregated along ethnic lines, with the settlers usually garnering the best farmlands and Muslims providing unskilled agricultural labor for the colonists' farms. The French adopted a policy of direct rule, considering Algeria an integral part of France, as what were called *départements d'outre mer*. Limited French education was offered to Algerians, producing a small number of *assimilés*, some of whom were allowed to vote along with colons in French elections sending representatives to the French Chamber of Deputies, as well as in local elections. Some of these *assimilés* wanted to assimilate completely, becoming North African Frenchmen. Others wanted to be "integrated," participating in French Algerian society while preserving a Muslim identity. French rule, however, primarily benefitted the colons, not the Muslims.

Early Calls for Algerian Independence

Algerians sacrificed dearly in support of France during World War I. Some 173,000 conscripted Algerians fought in the French Army during the war, many, if not most, serving on France's "frozen killing grounds." Hundreds of thousands of other Algerians worked in France to bolster the war effort. Limited political concessions were promised to the Algerians in return for their support of France. The number of Algerians allowed to vote was increased from a tiny fraction to 425,000.[8] This figure was regarded as entirely unsatisfactory by most Algerians, but the colons resisted more substantial concessions, fearing a reversal of their dominant position. Algerian popular discontent over France's failure to live up to its promises led to early calls for independence from French rule. The Star of North Africa (*l'Etoile nord-africain*), founded by Muslim Algerians in 1926, spoke up for independence. Membership in the organization included communists, French-educated Algerians, Algerian veterans of World War I, and Algerians in France who continued to work there in large numbers during the inter-war years. The movement, regarded as threatening to colonists' interests, was banned and forced underground by French colonial government and colon opposition. It was actually easier for members of the organization in France to organize and publicize their cause than it was in Algeria.[9] World War II brought another round of forced military and labor conscriptions and sacrifices for Muslim Algerians. This time, while many Algerians again served in Europe, other Algerians did not have to leave home because North Africa became a battleground where the Germans, the Italians, and the western Allies fought each other for control of the territory. Many North and West Africans were drafted into the French army and forced to fight for France, though some volunteered, either for the small pay offered or out of

8 Zagorski, Paul. *Comparative Politics: Continuity and Breakdown in the Contemporary World*. London: Routledge, 2009, p. 237.

9 Zagorski, 2009, p. 237.

genuine support for France. Like other French colonies, Algeria was torn between Vichy France and the Free French Government led by Charles de Gaulle, then in exile in England. Many colons preferred Vichy because they shared some of the Germans' racialist attitudes. But with the landing of Allied forces in North Africa in November of 1942, the colonial government of Algeria declared for De Gaulle.[10]

In 1943, with the tide of war shifting in favor of the Allies, Muslim leaders pressed the Free French government of Algeria with the "Manifesto of the Algerian People," which included calls for equality of Muslims and colons. The Manifesto was drawn up by Ferhat Abbas, a prominent nationalist leader. When these demands too were rebuffed, popular protest intensified. The French Algerian government, supported by the colons, responded with violent repression of the popular movement. The repression culminated in the Sétif Massacre of May 1945. The killings started in Sétif, near Constantine. They spread to other nearby towns, including Guelma and Kherrata. Official estimates were around 1,500 dead, but the real toll may have been as high as 40,000–80,000. The Sétif Massacre was a direct cause of the Algerian War of Independence. It was a watershed event from which there was no turning back, Even the *assimilés* no longer considered remaining part of France an option.[11]

The Algerian War of Independence, 1954–1962

Resistance to French rule was organized by the umbrella group of resistance organizations called the National Liberation Front (FLN). The resistance began in the coastal cities, especially Algiers, but soon spread to the Kabyle villages in the mountainous areas. The FLN set up an Algerian government in exile in Cairo under Nasser's protection. Egypt, itself having only recently staked out its independence from Britain and its stooge King Farouk, was sympathetic to the Algerian nationalist struggle. The Algerian Revolution became a model for other anti-colonial resistance movements, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yasir Arafat, and South Africa's African National Congress (ANC), led by Nelson Mandela. Algeria had suffered greatly during World War II. Algerians had been promised greater freedoms and rights as a reward for supporting France during the war, including greater representation in an Algerian parliament and expanded voting rights. But these promises were largely ignored, as they had been after World War I, partly due to colon opposition. Yet Algerians were encouraged by a worldwide trend towards decolonization. Decolonization, as mentioned in Chapter 1, was supported by both the US and the USSR. Recent examples of the success of the decolonization movement included Egypt, India, and Indonesia, all of whom had gained their independence by 1954, the year the Algerian Revolution began.

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10 Aroian, Lois A. and Richard P. Mitchell. *The Modern Middle East and North Africa*. New York: Macmillan, 1984, pp. 256–7.

11 Aroian and Mitchell, 1984, pp. 256–7; Zagorski, 2009, p. 237.

Despite Muslim overtones, the FLN was a classic secular-nationalist liberation movement influenced by Egypt. Algerian Muslims supported the struggle, but mostly for nationalist reasons. Algerian Islamists also supported the struggle, though not at first. Algerian Islamism was being revitalized in the 1950s by the arrival of Egyptian Muslim Brothers, fleeing Nasser's repression of that organization in 1954. Many Brothers fled Egypt, some becoming teachers in Algeria and other Maghrebi countries. Part of the leadership of the future Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was trained by Egyptian Muslim Brothers. Ali Belhadj, a founder of the FIS, is an example of an Algerian Islamist intellectual trained by the Brothers.[12] For the most part, Algerian Ulema did not support the FLN freedom fighters until 1956, two years into the insurgency. After that, most Islamists turned their support to the struggle for Algerian independence, only to have their agenda marginalized once the FLN came to power. Algerian Islamism, so important in the last decade of the twentieth century, remained relatively dormant until the early 1980s.[13]

By 1956, French security forces had neutralized the rebellion in the countryside, so the FLN decided to concentrate on the country's capital, Algiers. Events in the capital would be reported in the international press, thereby pressuring France to negotiate by appealing to world opinion. The architect of the new urban strategy was Abane Ramdane, a leading figure in the FLN and its chief theoretician, who was keenly aware of the value of international press exposure. Ramdane ordered a bombing campaign against civilian targets in the French quarter in retaliation for bombings by a colon outlaw militia called *Organization Armée Secret* (OAS) against civilian targets in the Casbah. The FLN's bombing campaign, directed by the movement's Algiers operations officer Saadi Yacef, was graphically portrayed in the 1966 Pontevedra film *Battle of Algiers*. In response, the French called in the elite 10th Parachute Division (Paras) commanded by General Jacques Massu, a veteran of France's Indo-China wars. Ultimately, the Paras' controversial and brutal tactics broke the FLN's urban cells.[14] At first the French claimed victory, having defeated the FLN militarily in the streets of Algiers by 1958. But France had been forced to resort to extreme measures to break the FLN, including routine torture of detainees, the bombing of Kabyle villages with jet aircraft, and, as mentioned above, a terrorist campaign perpetrated by outlaw OAS. The FLN responded with its own campaign of terrorist bombings, often against colon civilian targets. The French army was provoked into an overreaction, causing widespread alienation and bitterness among Muslim Algerians.

Algeria Achieves Independence

Despite the military defeat of the FLN's armed struggle, France was finally forced to quit Algeria. The struggle had morphed into a mass popular uprising

12 Kepel, 2002, p. 163.
13 Kepel, 2002, p. 55
14 Zagorski, 2009, p. 239.

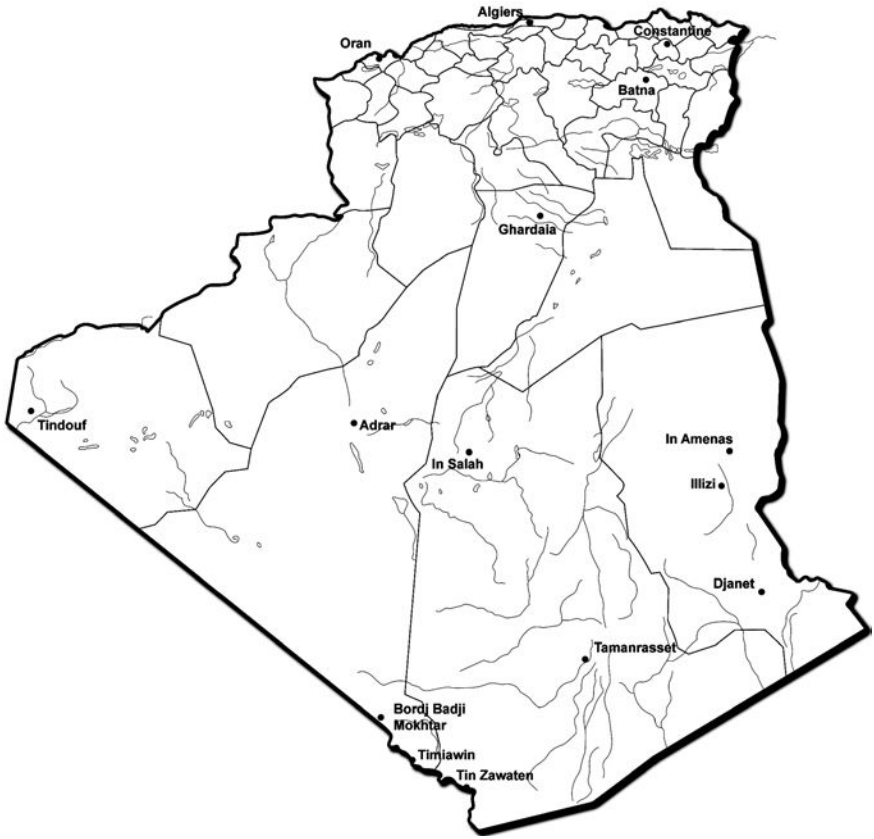
by 1960. The Algerian Muslim community, completely alienated by French army brutality, was driven into the arms of the weakened but still functioning FLN. Massive demonstrations by unarmed Algerians made governing the territory impossible. France, a democracy still reeling from its own brutal defeat during World War II, did not have the stomach to crush the Algerian popular resistance. Over a million settlers were evacuated by sea to France in 1962. The FLN formed an independent government and state, adopting the Egyptian Nasserist model, which featured, among other elements, single-party rule, and a socialist economic system. Ahmed Ben Bella, an early FLN leader who had spent most of the war in detention, became Algeria's first president. Oil from southern desert regions, which had only recently been discovered and exploited by the French, provided funding for state expenditures. The Algerian victory was a bitter defeat for Charles De Gaulle, who had staked his reputation on France holding on to Algeria despite the otherwise inexorable trend towards decolonization. As mentioned in Chapter 1, this decolonization trend had already cost France its other African colonies, including Mali.

State Building and Islam in Independent Algeria

Since gaining independence from France in 1962, Algeria has been dominated by the National Liberation Front (FLN), a political party derived from the heroic liberation movement that expelled the French. Algeria's first president, Ahmad Ben Bella, who ruled from 1962–1965, formed a nominal democracy that was in fact a military-ruled state with socialist elements, including state enterprises and government subsidies on commodities to support the growing urban populations that had suffered so much during the independence struggle. While the FLN always had Islamic overtones, it was from the start a secular-nationalist liberation movement on the Nasser model. Algerian Islamists had fought alongside the FLN during the struggle to build the new independent state, but they were marginalized by Ben Bella's socialist government after 1962.[15] Algeria associated with the Non-Aligned movement, as Nasser had done. Revenues derived from oil and natural gas reserves in the Algerian Sahara supported subsidies as well as military buildup, purchasing largely Soviet Bloc arms. However, the goal of the FLN, namely the liberation of the nation, having been achieved, the Front fragmented into various interest sections, including liberals, Marxists, former imprisoned leaders such as Ben Bella, and Kabyle factions. No faction emerged, however, that lobbied for a specifically Islamic Algeria, as the AUMA had done so effectively in the decades preceding the war of liberation.[16]

Ben Bella's successor, Colonel Houari Boumedienne (1970–1976), had been vice president and commander of the army. Many sectors of Algerian society,

15 Kepel, 2002, p. 55.
16 Willis, 1996, p. 35.



Map 2.1 Algeria
Credit: Max Rinkel

including the Islamists, had become weary of Ben Bella's constant political maneuvering and his inability to make economic progress, and he lost the support of all but the far left and his immediate circle. Boumedienne ousted him in a bloodless coup in June of 1965.[17] President Boumedienne consolidated the one-party system and also focused power within the military elite, bypassing the FLN political structure. Corruption and cronyism led to economic stagnation despite vast oil wealth and considerable tourist potential. Many Algerians sought work in France. The rural Kabyles were marginalized by the Arabic-speaking officials of the army and the central government.[18] Boumedienne had pandered to the disgruntled Islamist movement, including the AUMA and a new association called

17 Zagorski, 2009, p. 240; Willis, 1996, p. 44.

18 Botha, Anneli. "Terrorism in the Maghreb: The Transformation of Domestic Terrorism," Institute for Security Studies Monograph No. 144, June, 2008, p. 2.

al-Qiyam (values) that grew out of a mass gathering held in Algiers in 1964. Al-Qiyam began by focusing on continued French influence in the independent state and on demands the government do more to promote Arabic and Berber language education. It also stressed respect for Islamic values. But instead the association became a forum for popular protest against the Ben Bella regime. After using the discontent of the Islamists to bolster his criticism of Ben Bella's policies and emphasizing the importance of Algeria's Arab and Islamic past, Boumedienne fell back on nationalism, and the Islamists were again ignored.[19]

By the late 1970s, almost a decade after their counterparts in Egypt, Algeria's Islamists began to simmer with resentment over the FLN's secular policies and military rule. Algeria's first Islamist anti-government armed group, the Armed Islamic Movement (MIA), known as the Bouyali Group after its founder Mustafa Bouyali, appeared in the early 1980s. Bouyali was born in 1940 and was a veteran of the war of independence. He was one of the first Algerian Islamists to break with the FLN regime, becoming amir of the MIA. One of his followers was Ali Belhadj, who had been educated by Egyptian Muslim Brothers, and who later joined the FIS.[20] Bouyali went underground in 1982 as the MIA led bold attacks on the regime. He and his group represented the first serious challenge to FLN power, Islamist or otherwise. Leading a radical faction among Algeria's Islamists, he called for an Islamic state and implementation of Shariah law, and declared the nationalist regime "impious." Influenced by radical Egyptian Islamist ideologue Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966), he wanted to use armed struggle to achieve these goals. Bouyali provided a link in legitimacy between the heroic NLF struggles of the 1950s and the challenges of the FIS and the GIA in the 1990s. He symbolized the ideological shift from nationalism to Islamism that the country, at least its devout Muslims, was undergoing. The MIA fragmented, however, after Bouyali was killed by security forces in 1987.[21]

Political Openings and the Rise of the FIS

The year 1989 represents the high-water mark of the Islamist movement across the Muslim world. Hamas was threatening PLO hegemony in Palestine, Hassan al-Turabi seized power in the Sudan, and the Soviets evacuated Afghanistan, abandoning it to the Mujahidin. It must have appeared to the long-simmering Islamist movement in Algeria that its time had come.[22] In October of 1988, Algeria experienced the worst riots since independence as young urban poor, marginalized by the FLN, took control of the streets of Algiers. These unemployed young men had migrated to the cities to look for work or had come earlier with their

19 Willis, 1996, pp. 41, 45.

20 Filiu, Jean-Pierre. "The Local and Global Jihad of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghrib," *Middle East Journal*, 63 (2), Spring 2009, p. 216**;** Kepel, 2002, pp.159–62.

21 Kepel, 2002, pp. 163–4.

22 Kepel, 2002, p. 9.

parents for the same reason. They were a product of urban drift combined with the government policy of support for education. Urban drift was going on all over the world at the time, while the problem of government-supported education producing school leavers faster than the economy could absorb them was common in Africa and Asia. Socialist policies that favored public education had also led to economic stagnation. The result was a large sub-class of urban poor young men with an education and no job prospects, especially not in the field for which they were trained. As a result, these young men experienced what social theorists call "relative deprivation." In Algeria such young urban males were called *hittistes*, from the Arabic *hit* (wall) because they could be seen on the streets leaning against walls. In the wake of the riots, President Chadli Bendjedid introduced limited political reforms in October 1988, sacking some senior regime figures who had been responsible for the brutal security crackdown that put down the riots. Following his "reelection" in December 1988 (he ran unopposed), "Chadli," as he was called, went further, calling for a new constitution. The new constitution, endorsed by a popular referendum in February 1989, allowed political openings, including the right to form independent political parties. It effectively ended the FLN's 25-year political monopoly and called for Algeria's first multiparty elections.[23] This foray into political openings and multiparty format was in line with the tide of democratic sentiment, Huntington's third wave of democracy, then affecting much of Africa and Eastern Europe.

The October 1988 riots, called by some the "couscous riots" because they had begun as protests over chronic high prices for foodstuffs, gave Islamists an opening. As a result, they became the spokesmen for the *hittistes*.[24] The alliance between the alienated urban youth and the Islamists was sealed on March 10, 1989, by the formation of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). The new party, whose founders ranged from jihadist followers of Mustafa Bouyali, to former NLF veterans, succeeded in bringing together many disparate groups. The FIS was legalized in September of 1989 as Algeria's first official Islamic political party. Among its leaders were Ali Belhaji, who had played an organizational role in the 1988 unrest and his associate Abassi Madani. The FIS won municipal elections in June 1990, taking control of a majority of Algeria's communes.[25] The surprising popularity of the FIS was due to the fact that it had been able to bring together poor urban youth and traditional merchants and shopkeepers, also known as the "devout middle class."[26] The political goal of the FIS was nothing less than an Islamic state in Algeria. By early 1991, the FIS had already implied that it would, upon electoral victory, dissolve the assembly, ban future elections, and implement shariah law. Ali Belhaji's rhetoric, in particular, became fiery and increasingly anti-democratic, on occasion equating democracy with unbelief:

23 Botha, 2008, pp. 2, 4; Kepel, 2002, pp. 159–62;
24 Kepel, 2002, pp. 159.
25 Filiu, 2009, p. 216; Kepel, 2002, pp. 166–7.
26 Kepel, 2002, p. 168.

> Multi-partyism is not tolerated unless it agrees with the single framework of Islam … . If people vote against the Law of God … this is nothing other than blasphemy. The ulema will order the death of the offenders who have substituted their authority for that of God.[27]

A fumbling eleventh-hour attempt by the lame duck FLN-dominated assembly to reconfigure the new election laws so as to favor its own candidates led to a general strike organized by the FIS in May 1991. The FLN government, finally taking the FIS seriously, declared a state of emergency in June. Soldiers deployed on June 3, and Belhaji and Madani were both arrested and jailed on sedition charges on June 30. Prime Minister Sidi Ahmad Ghozali, who had been named by the army, postponed the legislative elections until December 26.[28] Despite the government's desperate tinkering with the electoral laws and the arrests of its leaders, the FIS shocked observers again by winning 47 percent of the total votes cast in the first round of voting for seats in the National People's Assembly in December 1991. Of the 430 seats contested, 231 were won outright by candidates in the first round. The rest were to be decided in a second round. Of the 231 seats won in the first round, the FIS gained 188 of them, while the stunned FLN won only 16.[29] Faced with the prospect of a clear legislative majority victory by an already gloating FIS, a military junta seized power in January 1992. The army "resigned" President Chadli, annulled the municipal elections and the first round of the legislative elections, and canceled the upcoming second round or runoff balloting for the remaining Assembly seats. In March 1992, the FIS was officially dissolved.[30] Militant factions of the FIS vowed to turn to violent means to claim what had been denied them through the electoral process.

By the early 1990s hundreds of Algerian militants who had trained and, in some cases, fought alongside the Afghan mujahidin in their jihad against the Soviets began returning to Algeria. These Algerian "Afghans," as they were called, nurtured hardened Islamist ideologies. In the late 1980s several hundred radical Algerian Islamists made their way to Peshawar to train and fight against the infidel Russian occupiers of Afghanistan. It was in Pakistan and Afghanistan that the Algerian mujahidin conceived the idea of overthrowing the secular-nationalist government of Algeria.[31] Some of them had been forward in the struggle. Abdullah Anas, for example, was involved early on, helping the Palestinian exile Abdullah Azzam form the Maktah al-Kidimat, a network of hostels, or "guest houses," in Peshawar that received Arab volunteers coming to join the jihad. Later Anas made his way to Panjshir Valley in northern Afghanistan to join up

27 Willis, 1996, p. 145.

28 Darling, Dan. "Special Analysis: Al-Qaeda's African Arm," *Winds of Change.* April 1, 2004, p. 1; Willis, 1996, p. 180; Kepel, 2002, p. 173.

29 Willis, 1996, p. 230; Darling, 2004, p. 1.

30 Kepel, 2002, p. 175.

31 Kepel, 2002, p. 164; US House 2005, pp. 1–2.

with the Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud. Qari Said (a.k.a. Abdul Rahman Gharzuli), who had married a daughter of Osama bin Laden, managed the Algerian hostel at Peshawar.[32]

Some Algerians reportedly crossed the border into Afghanistan with bin Laden in 1987 when he established his base called the Lion's Den in eastern Khost province.[33]Algerian Afghans started filtering back to Algeria in late 1989 and early 1990. Flushed with a sense of victory, they wanted to establish an Islamic Algerian state. The majority of the "Afghans" had seen little real combat experience, as both Qa'ida leadership and the Pakistani ISI held most of the Algerians back in the Pakistani camps, fearing that they might be penetrated by Algeria's notorious state intelligence agency, the Department of Information and Security (DRS).[34] Nonetheless, the Algerian Afghans were imbued with rigid Islamist sentiments and a commitment to violent jihad. Proud of their jihadi credentials, some returnees began sporting Afghan garb on the streets of Algiers. Many of the Afghans, including Qari Said, merged with the remnants of the old Bouyali Group.[35] Said rejected the political process outright, dismissing the FLN government as apostates. Others, including Abdullah Anas, supported the FIS, which sought, at first, reinstatement of the electoral system.[36] The Afghanistan veterans energized local Algerian Islamists, regaling them with stories of the great jihad. But eventually their extremist ideology cut them off from their base of popular support.[37]

The Algerian Civil War

GIA

The Algerian Civil War, also known as the Dirty War (*La sale guerre*) began as a result of the decision by radical Islamists to resort to armed struggle after the military intervention in 1992. By 1997, it had claimed between 100,000 to 150,000 lives, mostly civilians.[38] The opening salvo of jihadist violence in

32 Filiu, 2009, pp. 214–16. Ahmad Shah Massoud was a key Tajik warlord who led regional resistance to the Soviets.

33 Filiu, 2009, p. 214.

34 Algeria's Département du Renseignment et de la Sécurité has been accused, like Pakistan's ISI, of being a state within a state. In particular, it is known to have run numerous undercover and false flag operations (Palash Ghosh. "Algeria's Brutal DRS Intelligence Agency: The Nation's Real Power?" *International Business Times.* January 2,1 2013).

35 Botha, 2008, p. 7.

36 Hafez, Mohammed M. "Armed Islamist Movements and Political Violence in Algeria." *The Middle East Journal*,. 54 (4), Autumn 2000, p. 573; Filiu, 2009, pp. 216–17.

37 Kepel, 2002, p. 11.

38 Gerges, Fawaz. *Journey of the Jihadist: Inside Muslim Militancy*. New York: Harcourt, 2005, p. 153; Johnson 2006b, p. 2.

Algeria was perhaps an attack on a military post in Guemmar on the Algeria-Tunisia border in November of 1991.[39] But for the most part, the armed groups only gained prominence after the military intervention in January 1992.[40] The FIS, despite its electoral success, did not prove capable of holding together its diverse constituency of the urban poor and the devout middle class. The *hittistes*, led by Ali Belhaji, became increasingly radicalized and, consequently, threatening to the middle class. Abbassi Madani, an academic, led the devout middle class.[41] In October 1992, leaders of several armed Islamist factions convened a meeting at Tamesguida, attempting to form a united front. But after a surprise raid by security forces aborted the meeting, suspicions of infiltration by DRS double agents prevented any such unity.[42]

The GIA formed in late 1992 as a loose umbrella group linking the two main armed Islamist factions fighting the Algerian military for control and including smaller groups as well. It was a direct challenge to the FIS, some of whose leaders still advocated a return to the electoral process. The extremist "Afghans" such as Qari Said were partly responsible for the polarization between the GIA and the FIS.[43] The GIA's core included former fighters of Bouyali's MIA, along with "Afghan" veterans. It created a "jihadist-Salafist movement of extraordinary brutality."[44]As such, it represented a challenge to the FIS's leadership of the Islamist movement as much as it did opposition to the Algerian government. The GIA commenced its campaign of terror in early 1993, attacking military posts, convoys, and police stations. A spectacular example was an attack by a GIA unit on a barracks at Borughezoul in March that killed 41 people, including 19 soldiers. Mourad Si Ahmed (a.k.a. Djafar al-Afghani), formerly a contraband trader who had fought in Afghanistan, became amir of the movement in May of 1994. Under his leadership, government and law enforcement officials were assassinated both in the cities and in jihadist-controlled enclaves in the rural areas.[45] But by 1994, the GIA began attacking non-military targets as well, including foreigners, especially East Europeans working in Algeria, whom they considered infidels. It also targeted intellectuals and journalists. By late1993 the FIS leadership began to regret conceding leadership of the Islamist movement to the intransigent, extremist GIA, rejecting its targeting of civilians. In July 1994 the more moderate FIS formed the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS) as an armed alternative to the GIA. The AIS, in its public statements, allowed for the possibility of a return to the electoral process

39 Kepel, 2002, p. 256.

40 Hafez, 2000, p. 574.

41 Kepel, 2002, p. 168–9.

42 Hafez, 2000, pp. 573–4.

43 Darling, 2004, p. 2; Botha, 2008, p. 7; Hafez, 2000, p. 575; Filiu, 2009, p. 217.

44 Kepel, 2002, p. 255; US House 2005, p. 2.

45 Mincheva, Lyubov Grigorova and Ted Robert Gurr. *Crime-Terror Alliances and the State: Ethnonationalist and Islamist Challenges to Regional Security*. London: Routledge, 2013, p. 96; Kepel, 2002, p. 263.

and challenged the notion of jihad as compulsory. To the contrary, the GIA, for its part, in a public statement of principles issued in May 1994, stated, "no dialogue, no cease-fire, no reconciliation, and no security and guarantee with the apostate state" and "jihad is an Islamic imperative until judgment day."[46] Ultimately the GIA and the AIS spent as much time and energy fighting each other as they did fighting the government. They had different goals. The GIA wanted to establish an Islamic state through violent jihad. The AIS wanted to restore the electoral process that had been blocked by the government in 1992.[47]

Both the FIS and the GIA began to resort to extortion and criminality, including outright robbery, to finance their operations. The FIS had started, of course, by raising donations and collecting dues, like almost any political party. After the municipal elections on June 1990 in which the FIS won control of the councils in the majority of Algeria's communes, it also gained control over petty crime in the communes. It was able to extort a share of the profits from these criminal activities to supplement more legitimate funding. After the FIS was banned in 1990, the GIA and other Islamist groups were able to establish themselves in some of the communes, especially in rural or mountainous areas formerly controlled by the FIS. Thus, they were able to extort the "parallel" economy, including smuggling and trafficking in contraband, to support their recruitment and other activities. This parallel economy was described in Chapter 1 in the context of the Saharan regions of Algeria. The same underground, or "gray" economy, also functioned in the rural and urban sections of northern Algeria. GIA operatives were able to extort money from or "tax" the parallel economy to support themselves and their attacks. As we will see, when the GIA's successor organization the GSPC shifted its focus of operations to the Algerian and even Malian Sahara, it continued this process of extracting revenues from the *al-frud* smuggling and trafficking operations that formed such an important part of the economy of those regions. In addition to taxing the parallel economy, the GIA was not above using violence and intimidation to extort money from legitimate businesses, including drayage companies that transported commodities to the Sahara, as well as taxing ordinary civilians and looting property and livestock.[48] Such resort to "taxing" criminal enterprises and to outright crime is not uncommon with terrorist organizations in many countries.

In October 1994, Jamal Zaytuni became amir of the GIA. Zaytuni concentrated more on the power struggle with the AIS than on opposition to the "apostate" government. The FIS and the AIS denounced the GIA for its "excesses" against Algerian and foreign civilians.[49] In January of 1996, the GIA publicly declared war on the AIS, labeling its members apostates as well, and also pronounced *takfir* on

46 Mincheva and Gurr, 2013, p. 96.

47 Mincheva and Gurr, 2013, p. 96; Hafez, 2000, pp. 573, 576–7; Filiu, 2009, pp. 217, 218.

48 Mincheva and Gurr, 2013, p. 95.

49 Gerges, 2005, p. 52.

other militant groups. At the same time civil war raged between the military junta and the Islamists, another war was being waged between the GIA and the AIS. The two organizations represented different constituencies. The GIA still represented the Islamists among the urban poor, while the AIS represented the devout middle class.[50] It was under Zaytuni's leadership in late 1994 that the GIA began to export terrorism to Europe. Citing French support for the Algerian military government as the reason they had not yet been able to overthrow it, GIA terrorists hijacked an Air France jet in December 1994. GIA agents based in Europe perpetrated a series of bombings in Paris and across France in the summer and fall of 1995, resulting in some 100 dead. London-based Islamist intellectuals like Amar Makhlulif (a.k.a. Haydar Abu Doha) supported the GIA with propaganda and ideology up to 1996.[51] But the extremist Zaytuni began to embrace policies that eventually cost the GIA the support not only of the London intellectuals, but of other North African and international jihadi groups. Having already pronounced *takfir* on the NLF government and its military and police, Zaytuni added more and more groups, civil servants, intellectuals, journalists, and finally all FIS militants.

In June of 1996, Antar Zouabri became amir-general of the GIA. Zouabri blamed the civilian populace for not supporting his jihad. The death toll in the conflict soared as GIA fighters concentrated their attacks on "collaborating" civilians. Zouabri issued a *fatwa* in 1996 titled "The Great Demarcation," labeling the entire Algerian people *kufr* (impious) for failing to support his campaign against *le Pouvoir*, the government. This extreme hardline policy cost the GIA both international credibility and domestic support.[52] Ayman al-Zawahiri, of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad movement and future Qa'ida leader, denounced the GIA's "dangerous deviations, meaning Zaytuni's constant widening of the circle of *takfir*.[53] Other prominent Arab jihadi groups, including the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), broke publicly with the GIA over the excessive resort to *takfir*. The London-based jihadist publication *Al-Ansar* repudiated Zouabri for declaring the Algerian people impious.[54] The bloodiest year of the Algerian civil war, 1997, saw over 40 separate massacres of civilians, most attributed to the GIA, and the death toll approached an appalling 150,000, largely civilians, including many women and children.[55] The GIA's brutality cut it off from its grassroots support. Eventually Algerians would become fed up with both the GIA and the AIS and abandon them. Without popular support, the GIA gradually disappeared. On October 1, 1997, the AIS declared a unilateral ceasefire with

50 Hafez, 2000, pp. 579, 582; Kepel, 2002, pp. 169, 256, 266–7; Filiu, 2009, p. 219.

51 Schanzer, Jonathan. "Algeria's GSPC and America's 'War on Terror,'" The Washington Institute. October 2, 2002, p. 2; Kepel, 2002, pp. 255–6, 263.

52 Kepel, 2002, p. 255; Botha, 2008, p. 8; Darling, 2004, p. 2.

53 Filiu, 2009, p. 219.

54 Darling, 2004, p. 2; Kepel, 2002, p. 273. The LIGF formed in 1995 from Libyans who had fought or trained in the Afghanistan theatre (Bill Roggio. "Libyan Islamic Fighting Group joins al Qaeda." *Long War Journal.* November 3, 2007, p. 1.

55 Schanzer, 2002, p. 2; Hafez, 2000, p. 580; Filiu, 2009, p. 220.

the government. This declaration helped set a precedent for a series of government amnesties for Islamist fighters who were willing to lay down their arms.[56]

GSPC

In this milieu, the GSPC emerged, growing out of elements of the GIA leadership. It was formed in 1998 by GIA dissidents, including Hassan Hattab, Shaykh Abou al-Baraa, and Amari Saïfi, known as Al-Para because he had once been an Algerian army paratrooper.[57] They rejected the GIA's policy of attacking civilians, arguing that only military bases and personnel were legitimate targets. Hattab broke with the GIA in late 1996 because of the group's excesses, vowing to concentrate attacks on security forces, not civilians, but still adhering to the goal of an Islamist state in Algeria.[58] London-based jihadist Abu Doha was one of the first senior Islamist figures to urge the GSPC to split from the GIA.[59] Osama bin Laden, like Abu Doha, rejected Zouabri's 1996 *fatwa* and repudiated the GIA's anti-civilian attacks. Bin Laden and other Qa'ida leaders convinced Hattab to form the new organization that became the GSPC. Hattab became the new group's leader, al-Baraa its ideologue, and Saïfi (Al-Para), a field commander.[60] The GSPC's policy of refraining from attacking civilians allowed it to build a larger support network than that of the GIA, while at the same time co-opting the GIA's external support, including financial, recruitment, and weapons acquisition networks.[61] By 2000, though still adhering to the GIA's goal of an Islamist state in Algeria, the GSPC had embraced al-Qa'ida's ideology of global jihad.[62] The GSPC ultimately became Algeria's most significant Islamist terrorist movement.

Meanwhile, the wider Islamist movement in Algeria became more moderate, accepting the electoral process and even allowing women's participation in it as well as in the economy at large.[63] The government, for its part, organized elections in a move to restore democratic principles. In May of 1999 Abdul Aziz Bouteflika,

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56 Gerges, 2005, p. 153; Hafez, 2000, p. 583; Kepel, 2002, p. 273.

57 Elite rapid strike forces in the French military and in the militaries of many Francophone African countries are known as *paras* because they employ air-borne paratrooper units.

58 Hafez, 2000, pp. 582–3; Filiu, 2009, p. 220.

59 Katchadourian, Raffi. "Pursuing Terrorists in the Great Desert: The U.S. Military's $500 Million Gamble to Prevent the Next Afghanistan," *The Village Voice*, January 31, 2006, p. 6; Keats, Anthony. "The Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC)," CDI Center for Defense Information. January 14, 2003, p. 1. Abu Doha recruited numerous Algerians for Qa'ida training bases in Afghanistan.

60 Darling, 2004, pp. 2–3.

61 MIPT. Terrorism Knowledge Base. "Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC)," ND, p. 1; Schanzer, 2002, p. 6.

62 Schanzer, 2002, p. 1; Darling, 2004, p. 1; Ulph, Stephen. "Declining in Algeria, GSPC Enters International Theatre,." *Terrorism Focus*,. 3 (1). January 9, 2006, p. 1.

63 ICG, 2004, p. 2.

the FLN's former minister of foreign affairs, serving from 1963–1979, was elected president in what many claimed to be a "managed election." In September 1999 Bouteflika approved a referendum that passed the Law of Civil Concord. The Concord brought peace to Algeria by offering a conditional amnesty to the armed groups. Most groups accepted, and by the January 2000 deadline some 5,000 AIS militants had surrendered their weapons.[64] But the GSPC refused amnesty. By 2002 the GSPC claimed to have over 4,000 fighters and was concentrating its attacks on Algerian military convoys and bases. In September 2002 Bouteflika ordered a crackdown on the GSPC, Algeria's largest anti-Islamist operation in five years. The terrorist group responded with stepped-up raids, including an attack led by Amari Saïfi on a convoy near Batna in January 2003 that killed 43 Algerian soldiers.[65]

Despite the GSPC's new global rhetoric, Hattab remained committed to the GIA's original goal of "jihad in Algeria," or national jihad. During his tenure as GSPC amir, Hattab consistently denied any link with al-Qa'ida. However, his leadership was challenged by rival amirs who had a more internationalist outlook, including Nabil Sahrawi, Abd al-Malilk Drukdal, and Saïfi. Saïfi's kidnapping of 32 European tourists near Illizi in the Tassili Massif in early 2003 was a direct challenge to Hattab.[66] This debate between the nationalist goal of overthrowing the Algerian government and the internationalist goal of global jihad was intensified among GSPC leaders after the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States. In September 2003 Hassan Hattab, amid rumors he had begun to suggest reconciliation with the Algerian government, stepped down as GSPC amir in favor of the more radical Nabil Sahrawi. By 2004, the GSPC was being described as al-Qa'ida's proxy in Algeria.[67] In 2003 Sahrawi declared his support for brother jihadists in other countries. But Sahrawi was killed in a shootout with security forces in June of 2004. He was replaced by Abd al-Malik Drukdal, a.k.a. Abu Mus'ab Abdelewadad. Like Sahrawi, Drukdal began to echo the global jihad sentiments of Osama bin Laden, Zawahiri, and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, amir of al-Qa'ida in Iraq (AQI). Taking the name Abu Mus'ab as his *kunya* (symbolic paternity), the same *kunya* used by al-Zarqawi and the Syrian jihadist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, signaled his internationalist credentials.[68]Amari Saïfi, meanwhile, along

64 Aggad, Faten. "Overcoming Terrorism in Algeria: The Rahma, the Concorde Civile, and now National Reconciliation." University of Pretoria: Center for International Political Studies, Electronic Briefing 2005 Paper No. 44, p. 1; Gèze, François and Salima Mellah, "Algeria: The impossible transitional justice," *Algeria-Watch*, December 22, 2010, p. 1; Kepel, 2002, pp. 274–5; Botha, 2008, p. 5.

65 Schanzer, 2002, p. 1; Katchadourian, 2006, p. 2, 8; Mellah, Salima and Jean-Baptiste Rivoire., "El Para: The Maghreb's Bin Laden," *Le Monde Diplomatique,* February 4, 2005, p. 1.

66 Filiu, 2009, pp. 218, 220, n. 34.

67 Darling, 2004, p. 3.

68 Black, Andrew. "Mokhtar Belmokhtar: The Algerian Jihad's Southern Amir." *Terrorism Monitor*, 7 (12), May 8, 2009, p. 1; Filiu, 2009, p. 221. These *kunya* often serve

with the Afghanistan veteran and smuggling kingpin Mokhtar Belmokhtar, was extending GSPC operations to Algeria's Sahelian neighbors.

Expansion into the Sahara

In a global context, the GSPC's most threatening aspects were its reported links with al-Qa'ida and the expansion of its activities beyond Algeria to Europe and the Sahara and Sahelian countries, especially Mali. Abu Doha helped reorganize the GIA's former European networks under Qa'ida aegis with GSPC control.[69] US intelligence estimates suggested there may have been as many as 800 GSPC operatives in Europe in 2006. By that time the GSPC had claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist actions involving the Sahelian countries, especially Mauritania and Mali, and was deeply implicated in regional smuggling and trafficking activities.[70] As alarming as the prospect of the GSPC expanding into Europe was, little seems to have come it. GSPC's expansion into the Saharan reaches of Algeria, Mali, and Mauritania, on the other hand, was another matter. From the time GSPC's involvement in the Sahara leapt onto the world stage with the spectacular kidnapping of 32 European tourists in 2003 to the occupation of northern Mali by its successor group AQIM and its affiliates in 2012, the organization's Saharan expansion has been front page news. GSPC's access to the Saharan "outlaw networks," especially Belmokhtar's smuggling routes, was first established by Hassan Hattab. But because of Hattab's commitment to national jihad, he chose not to make significant use of these networks. Serious GSPC involvement in the Sahara began under Amir Drukdal, whose "global" posture was enhanced by it.[71] The kidnapping of the 32 European tourists took place between February and April of 2003 around the town of Illizi near the Libyan border.[72] The hostages were taken by a GSPC cell led by Saïfi (Al-Para). The first group of the hostages was freed in May 2003, just days after a visit to Algiers by Joseph Fischer, head of the German federal intelligence service (BDD). The second group was released into the custody of Malian authorities in Bamako in August 2003 after a reported €5 million ransom was paid to Saïfi's group, allegedly by the German government. The second group of hostages is believed to have been held from May to August at Saïfi's base in the Adagh in the Malian Région of Kidal.[73]

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as a *nom de guerre*. The reference in these cases is to Mus'ab ibn Umar (d. 625 AD), a companion of the Prophet.

69 Keats, 2003, p. 1; Katchadourian, 2006, p. 6.

70 Motlagh, Jason. "US opens new war front in North Africa," Asia Times.org. June 14, 2006, p. 3.

71 Filiu, 2009, pp. 220–22; Whitelaw, 2005b, p. 3.

72 Mellah and Revoire, 2005, p. 1; Katchadourian, 2006, p. 6. Illizi is not far from the In Amenas, where Belmokhtar and his fighters overran an Algerian natural gas facility and took foreign hostages 10 years later in January of 2013.

73 Mellah and Rivoire, 2005, pp. 2–3; Katchadourian, 2006, p. 6.

The incident revealed the GSPC could operate with relative impunity in the desert regions of northern Mali, and had probably been doing so for some time.[74] Its presence in the area was also highlighted in January 2004 when two stages of the Mali leg of the Paris-Dakar auto race had to be rerouted due to rumors that militants under Saïfi were going to attack the rally.[75] Notwithstanding such reports, the only fully documented case of GSPC activity in Mali remained the headline-grabbing kidnapping of the German tourists. The GSPC maintained a similarly limited presence in Mauritania as well. The government of former President Ma'aouia Ould Taya, who was overthrown in a bloodless coup in August of 2005, regularly released reports of arrests of suspected GSPC activists in Mauritania. Some of these arrests were made in the course of sweeps following three earlier coup attempts against the Ould Taya regime, one in 2003 and two in 2004.[76] One such report mentioned some 20 Mauritanians who went to train in a guerilla camp in southern Algeria. Seven of these were arrested upon their return home in May 2005 and charged with plotting acts of terror.[77] Some observers are skeptical about the extent of GSPC activity in Mauritania, suggesting the unpopular Ould Taya may have exaggerated opposition links to the Algerian group in order to attract aid from the US through the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI). Political Islam seems to be a recent development in Mauritanian Islam, which has been more typically associated with the Sufi brotherhoods. Besides, opposition to Ould Taya seems to have had more to do with popular discontent over his pro-US and pro-Israel policies than with Islamism.[78] As in the case of Mali, there is one documented incident of GSPC activity in Mauritania, a raid on Lemgheity, a remote military outpost in the extreme northeast of the country in June of 2005 for which the GSPC claimed responsibility. The raid, led by GSPC commander Belmokhtar, resulted in 15 deaths.[79]

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74 Interview 107 (Songhai merchant from Bourem, residing in Bamako) Part 1.

75 BBC News, "Dakar Rally: 'Kidnap plot foiled.'" January 29, 2004, p. 1; Le Vine, Victor. "Mali: Accommodation or Coexistence?" in William F.S. Miles (ed.) *Political Islam in West Africa: State-Society Relations Transformed.* London: Lynne Rienner, 2007, p. 92.

76 "U.S.-Allied Leader of Mauritania Overthrown," *The Washington Post.* August 4, 2005. The successful coup was led by Col. Ely Ould Mohamed Vall with the support of a military junta called the Military Council of Justice and Democracy.

77 Ulph, Stephen. "Mauritania and the GSPC Spectre," *Terrorism Focus.* 2 (9), May 18, 2005, p. 1; Motlagh, Jason, "Analysis: W. Africa may be terror hotbed," UPI, May 23, 2005, p. 1.

78 McGregor, Andrew. "Military Rebellion and Islamism in Mauritania," *Turkish Weekly.* February 25, 2005, p. 4. Mauritania opened diplomatic relations with Israel in 1999, one of only a few Arab states to do so.

79 US State Department, 2006, p. 1, IRIN, p. 1. Whitelaw, Kevin. "The Mutating Threat." US News and World Report, (26 December 2005). http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1546595/postsp. 3; McGregor, Andrew, "GSPC Leader Issues New Threat to US Military Bases in North Africa," *Terrorism Focus*, 3 (19), May 17. 2006, p. 1.

The GSPC failed to follow up effectively on the 2003 mass kidnapping. It reportedly used the ransom money to buy arms in northern Mali, a region awash with weapons after the resolution of the Tuareg insurgency in 1996. Saïfi's fighters were taking the arms back to Algeria in early 2004, presumably to use in anti-government raids, when his column was intercepted by a joint Algerian-Malian force. This action precipitated a dramatic four-country chase across the Sahel as far as northern Chad, where the GSPC fighters were defeated in a pitched battle with Chadian army forces in March 2004. Fleeing the scene of the battle, Saïfi and 50 of his followers were captured by fighters of an anti-government rebel group called the Chadian Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJT). The MDJT eventually handed Saïfi over to Libyan security agents who in turn remanded him to Algerian custody.[80] Of the 43 GSPC fighters killed in the engagement in Chad, some were from Mali and Niger, indicating the GSPC had the ability to recruit in the Sahelian countries.

Similarly, the GSPC did not significantly follow up on the Lemgheity raid. Though preceding the Mauritanian coup of August 2005 coup by only two months, the raid does not seem to have been directly linked to it. The coup took place in the capital Nouakchott, in the opposite corner of the country, and does not seem to have been associated with GSPC activity, despite claims by former President Ould Taya regarding the earlier coup attempts.[81] Indeed, fears expressed by observers over the GSPC presence in the Sahelian countries seem to focus more on the potential for such a presence to cause trouble and less on actual results. The Lemgheity raid may have actually had more to do with the smuggling and contraband aspects of the Saharan arm of the GSPC. It is known the group's initial contacts in the Sahara were smugglers as much as Islamist activists and jihadists. Belmokhtar, who led the raid, was a long-time smuggler as well as a jihadist. Known as "Mr. Marlboro," he had played a leading role in the contraband tobacco trafficking networks of the Sahara. Lemgheity is, after all, not far from one of the major Saharan tobacco trafficking routes. This particular route stretches from the ports of the Western Sahara, passing through northern Mauritania near Lemgheity to the Idrar des Ifoghas region of Mali, and from there across the Algeria-Mali border near al-Khalil. It then travels up the Algerian highway system through Ghardaïa, the smuggling capital of Algeria and Belmokhtar's hometown, and on to Algiers and other coastal cities. If the Mauritanian troops at Lemgheity were involved in contraband interdiction, for which they were being trained by US

80 Mellah, Salima and Jean-Baptiste Rivoire. "El Para," p. 4; Katchadourian, "Pursuing Terrorists," pp. 6, 9. The US ordered two C-130 Hercules transports from Ramstein AFB in Germany to re-supply the Chadians to aid in their pursuit of Saïfi's fighters. The planes landed at Chad's Faya-Largeau airfield. The MDJT (Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad) is a secular rebel group seeking since 1998 to overthrow Chad's President Idriss Déby.

81 Motlagh, Jason. "Analysis: US action may provoke 'new terror front' in Sahel," *Middle East Times*. May 16, 2005, p. 2.

Special Forces Operations advisors provided by the PSI, the raid may have been more about trafficking than about terrorism.

In the case of Mali, there was concern the GSPC might somehow rekindle Tuareg unrest of the type that had boiled over in the insurgency of the early to mid-1990s. The center of the Tuareg insurgency was the Kidal Région, the same area where GSPC activities were concentrated. Additional fears concerned the possibility the GSPC might somehow interact with other Islamist groups active in Mali. Notable among these was the Pakistani missionary group Jama'at al-Tabligh, also known to have been active in Kidal. While the Tablighis are Islamist and Salafist, they are not jihadist or militant, relying primarily on peaceful missionary work. Nor is there any direct evidence the two groups were working together. Likewise, in Mauritania the chief concern seems to have been the potential for GSPC activists to interact with local Islamists and anti-government groups to precipitate a coup. These concerns were, as we have seen, partly manufactured by the Ould Taya regime.[82] Aside from recruiting some Malians and Nigeriens, and possibly some Mauritanians, into its ranks, participating in local raids, and engaging regional security forces, the impact of the GSPC in the Sahelian countries was at first limited. The kidnapping incident nonetheless served to highlight the connectivity of the North and West Africa meta-region described in Chapter 1. A terrorist group based in northern Algeria, operating through its Saharan arm, kidnapped European tourists in southeastern Algeria and held them in northern Mali. Some of them were ultimately released in the Malian capital Bamako, in southern Mali. The subsequent pursuit of the perpetrators began in southern Algeria and passed through the Saharan reaches of two additional West African countries, Niger and Chad. In northern Chad, where the most of Saïfi's cell was either captured or killed, Algerians, Malians, Chadians, and Nigeriens, were among those killed.

The Rise of AQIM

Transformation from National Jihad to Global Jihad

In northern Algeria by 2006, the GSPC was about to undergo another transformation, morphing yet again into a new terrorist organization with a new name and a new outlook. Since the beginning of Drukdal's tenure as amir, the GSPC had begun moving in an internationalist direction and paying lip service to Qa'ida rhetoric. The Iraq War brought the GSPC squarely in line with al-Qa'ida's Global Jihad. The call of jihad in Iraq allowed GSPC to recruit numerous young Algerians who wanted to join the fight in Iraq. This recruitment opportunity helped compensate for a general depletion of recruits in Algeria due to President Boutiflika's amnesties. And it was Belmokhtar's Saharan trafficking routes along which these recruits were smuggled, passing through Libya and on to Mesopotamia to support

82 Motlagh, "Analysis: US action …," p. 2.

Al-Qa'ida in Iraq.[83] The GSPC's Qa'ida links grew as the group funneled young North African activists, not only from Algeria, but from Tunisia and Libya as well, to Iraq. The catalyst for the GSPC-Qa'ida merger was the apparent success of AQI against the American invaders and Iraqi Shi'as, but al-Qa'ida only allowed the affiliation of GSPC after a long vetting process starting in June of 2005. The ideological split between Drukdal and Hassan Hattab, who had forsworn attacks on civilians, may have suggested the GSPC was returning to such attacks. Presumably Qa'ida leadership wanted to be sure the GSPC would not give itself over to the excesses of its predecessor the GIA.[84] Between January and October of 2006 the GSPC carried out over 100 attacks, most of them deadly and most of them against military targets in northern Algeria. Also in 2006 the GSPC began to adopt Qa'ida tactics, including suicide bombings, heretofore unknown in Algeria, and propaganda videos. On September 11, 2006, a date likely specially chosen, given al-Qai'da's predilection for dramatic symbolism, Zawahiri announced the Qa'ida merger with GSPC.[85] According to French Islamicist Jean-Pierre Filiu, the GSPC earned Qa'ida support in three ways. First, the group refused national reconciliation with the Algerian government. Second, it targeted outside powers, including France and Western tourists. And third, it operated beyond Algeria's borders in countries like Mauritania and Mali. In December of 2006, Drukdal pledged *bay'at* (personal loyalty) to Osama bin Laden. He then cemented his pledge with an attack on a bus near Algiers that was carrying employees of Brown & Root-Condor, a subsidiary of the Halliburton Consortium. In January of 2007, GSPC formally took the name Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and was thus fully integrated into the global jihad.[86] The GSPC's merger with al-Qa'ida effectively wrecked Bouteflika's amnesty process, especially the Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation that had been adopted in 2005.[87]

In an effort to highlight its recent transformation, AQIM began in early 2007 to use regularly the guerilla-style tactics popularized by AQI. These tactics included

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83 Filiu, 2009, p. 221. Algerian amnesties for jihadists included the February 1995 Law of Cleansing (*rahma*), Boutiflika's June 1999 Law of Reconciliation, approved by a popular referendum a few months after Bouteflika took office, and the August 2005 Charter for Peace and Reconciliation (Filiu, 2009, p. 221, n. 40).

84 Guidère, Mathieu. "Une Filiale algérienne pour Al-Qaida." *Le Monde Diplomatique,* November 2006, pp. 1–2; Filiu, 2009, p. 222; Ulph, 2005, p. 1.

85 Guidère, 2006, pp. 1–2, 4; Gardiner, ND, p. 2; Filiu, 2009, p. 223.

86 Filiu, 2009, p. 223; Gardiner, ND, p. 1.

87 Guidère, 2006, p. 2. The Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation was enacted in August 2005 and approved by a popular referendum on September 29, 2005. It closed ongoing cases of prosecution and terminated sentences for most people who committed acts of violence during the "Dirty War." It also provided compensation for victims and reinstated the ban on the FIS from political activity (Hidouci, Ghazi, "'Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation' in Algeria: Threatening Contradictions," July 2006. http://www.arab-reform.net/%E2%80%9Ccharter-peace-and-national-reconciliation%E2%80%9D-algeria-threatening-contradictions).

ambushes, mortar rounds, RPGs, and IEDs, including vehicle-borne IEDs, or VBIEDs. In April 2007, suicide bombings were added to the repertoire, mostly targeting government and police offices in Algiers, including the government palace and two security posts that were hit by simultaneous suicide bombings. Algeria's first-ever suicide bombings, these attacks killed more than 30 people and marked the start of a new AQIM offensive.[88] Drukdal announced the following month that suicide bombings would become a regular modus operandi of the organization. The peak of this offensive came on December 11, 2007, as a pair of simultaneous car bombings hit both the nation's Constitutional Council and the United Nations headquarters. The VBIED attack on the UN offices was triggered by a suicide bomber.[89] In addition to highlighting the new global, internationalist focus of AQIM, the choice of the UN offices seems to have been yet another page borrowed from the AQI playbook, mirroring as it did the 2003 attack on UN headquarters in Iraq.

AQIM in the Sahara

The expansion into the Sahara was begun by the GSPC, but it continued under its new iteration AQIM. I am arguing that the move into the Sahara-Sahel region was largely due to the group's failure to achieve its objectives in northeastern Algeria, its original area of operations. The GSPC turned to al-Qa'ida's global jihad for support and legitimacy largely because of the failure of its national jihad agenda. By the early 2000s, the Algerian government had largely contained the jihadist threat by capturing and killing key leaders, much as the French had dealt a military defeat to the NLF by the late 1950s. Most jihadists had conceded defeat and put down their arms, accepting one or another of President Boutiflika's amnesty offers.[90] Former GIA leader Antar Zouabri, who had pronounced *takfir* on the entire Algerian people, was killed by security forces in February 2002. By that time the GIA was falling apart and the AIS was long gone. Hassan Hattab was retrenching to protect what remained of GSPC strongholds in the mountain areas east of Algiers.[91] In June of 2005 Amari Saïfi, a.k.a. Al-Para, was imprisoned for life for his role in the mass kidnapping of 2003. GSPC chief ideologue Shaykh Abou al-Baraa was killed in January 2006 in a battle with Algerian troops.[92] The GSPC, some observers argue, expanded into the Sahara partly because it was pushed out of northern Algeria by government security

88 "Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)." The National Counterterrorism Center, Counterterrorism Calendar, 2009, pp. 1–2; Filiu, 2009, p. 213.

89 BBC News. "'Dozens killed' in Algeria blasts." December 11, 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7137997.stm; Filiu, 2009, p. 213.

90 Gerges, 2005, p. 131.

91 Filiu, 2009, p. 220.

92 Ulph, 2006, p. 1.

forces.[93] By that time, if not earlier, most Algerian Islamists had turned away from Salafism and violent jihad for more accommodationist tactics, abandoning the goal of an Islamist state, accepting women's roles outside of the home, and returning to the electoral process.[94]

In September of 2005, as mentioned above, Algerians voted for the Charter for National Reconciliation and Peace. The GSPC, however, rejected the Charter, remaining the only activist group still fighting.[95] But even the GSPC, according to journalist Andrew McGregor, was losing influence in Algeria by 2006. By that time former GSPC amir Hassan Hattab had accepted amnesty and was urging his colleagues to do likewise. The Algerian government offered yet another amnesty deal to Islamist radicals that took effect in March of 2006. This time many GSPC fighters accepted the offer. In June that year, three high-ranking leaders of the GSPC surrendered to Algerian authorities. Drukdal confirmed in a statement the defections of his three companions.[96] AQIM in the years after its 2006 merger with al-Qa'ida also seemed to be failing in its self-proclaimed global aims for three main reasons. First, AQIM could not maintain its leadership of other small North African Islamist fighting groups. These groups, Libya's LIFG, Morocco's GICM, and Tunisia's GICT, had loosely merged with the GSPC in 2006 in an attempt at unity of the four terrorist groups.[97] Second, AQIM, having made itself an outcast organization in Algeria, could not reverse the Algerian people's turn away from armed jihad, nor could it change the accommodationist post-jihad politics of most of Algeria's Islamists. Third, it could not, except for its Saharan brigade, attack beyond the borders of Algeria. To be sure, AQIM could and did continue to kill a lot of people in Qa'ida-style attacks in northern Algeria, but its global jihad, by 2009, meant local suicide bombings backed by global rhetoric. Most of the dead in AQIM attacks in 2008–2009, despite the group's global claims, were Algerians.[98]

AQIM as a "Hybrid" Terrorist Group

The Saharan arm of AQIM had an estimated 400 to 800 active members in 2010, according to Alain Antil, head of the French Institute of International Relations

93 Le Vine, 2007, p. 91; ICG, 2005, p. 7.

94 ICG, 2004, p. 2.

95 Aggad, 2005, p. 5.

96 McGregor, 2006, p. 1; Ulph, 2006, p. 1.

97 Roggio 2007, p. 2. Tunisia's GICT had recruited the suicide bomber who killed Afghanistan's Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud on September 10th of 2001 (Filiu, 2009, p. 223).

98 Filiu, 2009, pp. 224–6. Notable among AQIM's 2008 attacks was the August 19 VBIED attack on job applicants waiting in line outside a police academy at Les Issers to the east of Algiers that killed 48 and wounded 45. Algeria's worst terrorist attack since the 1990s, the Les Issers bombing was reminiscent of similar attacks in Iraq in the period 2007–2008 (Stewart and Burton, 2009, p. 2).

(IFRI).[99] Run by Mokhtar Belmokhtar and his deputy Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, it was called the Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade. It had a better global record than its parent organization, the north Algerian branch. In December 2007, the Saharan Brigade murdered four French tourists in Mauritania, forcing the cancellation of the Paris-Dakar land race that year.[100] And in 2008 it attacked the Israeli Embassy in the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott, spraying it with gunfire.[101] Despite numerous apparently ideologically motivated attacks and kidnappings, AQIM in the Sahara, for a while at least, appeared to have all but abandoned its Islamist agenda and become a hybrid terrorist organization, as much motivated by organized criminal activity as by religious or political goals.[102] Other examples of "hybrid" terrorist organizations would include the Colombian FARC and the Afghan Taliban, Such hybrid terrorist groups have been best defined by University of Paris terrorism expert Xavier Raufer. Raufer says hybrid groups have three main characteristics. First, they possess ultra-rapid mutation capabilities and can change tactics and operations as a function of their profitability. Second, they are frequently nomadic or deterritorialized and transnational, often operating in remote or inaccessible areas. And third, they lack state sponsorship of any kind, making them unpredictable and uncontrollable. Raufer adds:

> Today the real menace derives from hybrid groups that are opportunistic and capable of transformation at lightning speed. The real conflicts (in the Balkans, Africa and so on) are by essence civilian conflicts, more often than not ethnic or tribal in nature. Like veritable melting pots of crime, they blend religious fanaticism, famine, massacres, piracy at sea or airline highjacking with the trafficking of human beings, drugs, arms, toxic substances or gems ("blood diamonds").[103]

AQIM's Saharan branch qualifies as a hybrid group on all these counts. First, it showed it was capable of rapid mutation in the way it switched from arms and cigarette trafficking to kidnapping for ransom in the early 2000s and

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99 "Fresh thinking urged to fight terrorism in Sahel," *Middle East Online*. October 8, 2010, p. 1

100 Filiu, 2009, p. 224; Gardiner, ND, p. 2. Tariq bin Ziyad was the eighth-century Arab conqueror who led a recently Islamized Berber army across the Strait of Gibraltar to conquer Visigothic Spain, establishing what became the Caliphate of Cordoba. The name Gibraltar derives from Jebel al-Tariq, the Mountain of Tariq.

101 Johnson, Scott. "The Fight against Al Qaeda Moves to Africa," *Newsweek.* November 23, 2009, p. 7.

102 Harmon, Stephen. "From GSPC to AQIM: The evolution of an Algerian Islamist terrorist group into an Al-Qa'ida Affiliate and its implications for the Sahara-Sahel region," *Concerned Africa Scholars Bulletin,* 85, Spring 2010, pp. 19–20.

103 Raufer, Xavier. "Chaos, terrorism and beyond: a strategic prognosis." *Real Instituto Eclano.* November 11, 2008, pp. 3, 5.

then again by adapting to drug smuggling opportunities by 2007 and earlier.[104] Second, it operated in the remote and inaccessible Sahara. Third, it had no state sponsors, except perhaps the clandestine support of certain Malian civilian and military leaders. Even before the Qa'ida merger in 2006, the GSPC had strong links to trafficking and smuggling. An International Crisis Group (ICG) report of 2004 on the threat level of GSPC's terrorist activities in the Sahel region stressed the importance of the group's Saharan trafficking networks. The report said local support for the GSPC in Algeria had become sparse, forcing it to rely on its Saharan support groups for funding.[105] Journalists and other observers noticed GSPC/AQIM's links to crime and trafficking as early as 2003, pointing out that the leaders of its Saharan branch, such as Saïfi and Belmokhtar, were involved in kidnappings for ransom and trafficking contraband, especially cigarettes.[106] Trinity College historian Vijay Prashad calls AQIM a "trans-Saharan gang."[107] Algerian Journalist Salim Ahmad says that when "extremist religious" arguments fail, such groups turn to new ways of operating and recruiting new members.[108] The late West Africanist Victor Le Vine, in describing GSPC activities in the Sahelian countries, included attacks on truck convoys, hostage-taking, and contraband trafficking in cigarettes, fuel, arms, and human migrants.[109]

Since such observations were made, evidence has surfaced linking AQIM increasingly to drug smuggling. West Africa has long been a transit zone for illegal drugs destined for the European market. For years there was transit traffic in heroin emanating from Nigeria, some of it passing through Mali.[110] Seizures of cocaine in Mali and other West African countries since 2007 indicated a new line of trafficking in cocaine headed for Europe and supplied by operatives of Colombia's FARC, itself a hybrid terrorist group. In 2007, seizures of cocaine were reported in Niger and Burkina Faso. That same year, Antonio Mazzitelli, director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for West Africa, noted an increase in the volume of cocaine traffic in Mali and Niger.[111] In April 2008, Malian officials reported a seizure of 750kg of cocaine in two four-wheel-drive

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104 Arfaoui, Jamel. "Al-Qaeda, drug traffic alliance threatens Sahel security." *Magharebia.* January 8, 2010, p. 1.

105 ICG Report No. 29, 2004, p. 2; BBC News, 2003, p. 1

106 ICG Report No. 29, 2004, p. 2.

107 Prashad, Vijay. "Sahelian blowback: what's happening in Mali?" *Concerned Africa Scholars Bulletin. N°85 US militarization of the Sahara-Sahel: Security, Space & Imperialism.* Spring 2010,

108 Arfaoui, 2010, p. 2.

109 Le Vine, 2007, pp. 91–2.

110 While I was doing archival research in Mali in the mid-1980s, the Malian party-controlled newspaper *L'Essor* ran a photograph of two Nigerians arrested in Mali for smuggling heroin in boxes of laundry soap.

111 IRIN. "Sahel: Traffickers targeting poorest countries." *Dakar.* April 23, 2007, p. 1.

vehicles. The seizure took place after a gun battle with smugglers near the town of Tin Zawaten, on the Algerian border near the Adrar des Ifoghas. The gunmen abandoned the two vehicles and fled with their wounded in a third into Algeria. There were also large cocaine seizures in Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, and Sierra Leone that year.[112]

In 2009, an EU drug task force delegation held talks with Algerian officials on Saharan drug trafficking. They noted that trafficking routes involving heroin from Kenya and cocaine from West Africa converged in the Sahara for transshipment to Europe. Reportedly, the heroin was coming from Afghanistan while the cocaine, increasingly popular in Europe, was coming from Colombia.[113] AQIM, long involved in the smuggling of so-called legal commodities such as cigarettes and human migrants, rose to the occasion and became involved in this West African drug traffic.[114] Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) reported cocaine was coming by sea to coastal towns like Bissau, Conakry, and Dakar. It was then sent to interior towns like Bamako and Ouagadougou. From there it was carried in trucks, often by Tuareg nomads, across the Sahara, destined for Europe.[115] On December 18, 2009, US federal prosecutors announced the arrest of three Malian men accused of smuggling cocaine through the desert with AQIM associates. The men were arrested in a US Drug Enforcement Agency sting after DEA agents posed as FARC representatives. The Malians had offered to smuggle 1,000 kg of cocaine across the desert and claimed AQIM connections.[116]

Another source of money was kidnapping for ransom, as opposed to hostage-taking for political purposes. Between 2003 and 2010, AQIM raised an estimated €50 million in ransoms reportedly paid by European governments to redeem their kidnapped nationals, including millions of dollars in 2009 alone. As of October of 2010, AQIM was holding for ransom in the Malian desert seven foreigners, five of them French citizens, kidnapped from a uranium mining town in Niger.[117] In addition, AQIM was demanding €7 million for two Spaniards seized in Mauritania and also being held in Mali. Journalist Philip Sherwell believes AQIM kidnaped for money as well as for ideological reasons. He notes that British hostage Edwin Dyer was executed in late 2009 after the British government refused to release jailed Jordanian Islamist radical Sheikh Abu Qatada. Dyer was part of a larger

112 BBC News Africa. "Mali cocaine haul after firefight." January 4, 2008, p. 1.

113 Ilias, Mahrez. "EU delegation in Algeria to discuss terrorism, drug-trafficking in Sahel." *BBC Monitoring International Reports,* December 10, 2009, p. 1.

114 Arfaoui, 2010, p. 1.

115 IRIN Africa. "Sahel: Traffickers targeting poorest countries." April 23, 2007, p. 1.

116 Rashbaum, William K. "U.S. Charges 3 Malians in Drug Plot," *New York Times.* December 18, 2009; Sherwell, Philip. "Cocaine, kidnapping and the al-Qaeda cash squeeze," *The Telegraph.* March 6, 2010, p. 1.

117 "Fresh Thinking …," 2010, p. 2; Diallo, Tiemoko. "Ex-Rebels Clash with Drug Smugglers in Mali Desert," Reuters, October 17, 2010, p. 1; Chikhi, Lamine. "Sahara army chiefs meet to draft anti-Qaeda plan." Reuters. 2010, p. 1.

group of kidnapped European tourists and aid workers, the rest of whom were released after ransoms were paid. So while there may have been a secondary ideological motive in AQIM's kidnappings, the collection of ransom money seems to be the primary motive. The funds received from kidnappings were used, along with money raised from drug smuggling, to fund AQIM's military activities, including purchasing arms and training recruits.[118]

However, what may have been until recently AQIM's leading source of funds was tobacco smuggling, mostly in the form of cigarettes. Journalist Kate Wilson claims cigarette smuggling "provided the bulk of financing for AQIM." Marlboro and Gauloises were apparently the favorite brands.[119] She notes the group derived funds not primarily from smuggling cigarettes but from extorting protection fees from other smugglers. Tobacco smuggling routes cross the Sahara to Europe. Directed by Tuaregs using cell phones, the cigarettes pass in containers through the Mauritanian town of Zerouate to Kidal Région in the Mali. From there they go via smaller trucks across the border to Algeria and thence to Europe, entering untaxed through Italy. The same routes are also used to traffic weapons and human migrants.[120]

Belmokhtar's name constantly comes up in reference to AQIM's tobacco traffic. Considered a born smuggler, he was born in 1972 in Ghardaïa in central Algeria astride the main route between the southern desert and Algiers. He trained with Arab mujahidin in Afghanistan and Pakistan in 1991. Returning to Algeria in the early 1990s, he joined the GIA. Belmokhtar followed Hassan Hattab in defecting to the GSPC and was placed in charge of the group's southern zone with responsibility for weapons procurement.[121] There he served as a link between the Tuareg cigarette smuggling networks and the GSPC. Dubbed "the untouchable" by French intelligence and "Mister Marlboro" by local Tuareg, he is considered AQIM's lead smuggler.[122] As with the kidnappings, Belmokhtar's activities have also been linked to ideological motives. As of 2006, US intelligence analysts believed Belmokhtar was recruiting Islamists in northern Mali for AQIM and possibly also for transfer to Iraq. The defense department reportedly considered air strikes against him. Despite these reports, later discounted, evidence for Belmokhtar's smuggling and trafficking activities is much more conclusive.[123]

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118 Wilson Kate. "Terrorism and Tobacco: How Cigarettes Finance Jihad and Insurgency Worldwide." *The Cutting Edge.* 2009, p. 1.

119 International Crisis Group (ICG). "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?" *Africa Report N° 92,* 2005, p. 18.

120 ICG Report No 92. 2005, p. 18; Liao, Isabela. "Trafficking in Women for the Purpose of Forced Prostitution: Italy's Article 18, its Positive Effects in Victims and its Role as a Model for Other European Union Countries." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Pittsburg State University, 2005, passim.

121 Black, Andrew. "Mokhtar Belmokhtar: The Algerian Jihad's Southern Amir." *Terrorism Monitor*, 7 (12), May 8, 2009, p. 1.

122 Black, 2009, pp. 1–2; Wilson, 2009, p. 1.

123 Katchadourian, 2006, p. 4.

Besides trafficking in cigarettes and arms, AQIM traffics in human migrants. Human trafficking is common in West Africa and affects thousands of victims. The majority of these are migrants looking for paid work in Algeria and Libya, and sometimes Europe. Some, however, are involuntary migrants, either women trafficked for the sex trade or children trafficked as child labor.[124] Gao, in northern Mali, and Agadez, in northern Niger, are grouping points for migrants hoping to cross the Sahara. In March of 2007, 46 Ivorian boys were detained in Gao before they could be trafficked into the Sahara.[125] As is the case with cigarette trafficking, AQIM makes money as much by taxing and extorting protection fees from existing human migrant traffickers as by organizing the trafficking themselves (see Chapter 6). As the above evidence indicates, AQIM is clearly a hybrid terrorist organization, if not an outright criminal gang. AQIM, without doubt, has a long record of what are obviously terrorist acts with a political or religious-based motive in the service of either a regional or a global agenda, most notably the 2005 attack on Lemgheity. However, as noted above, the Lemgheity attack may have been as much motivated by the group's desire to protect its tobacco routes as for ideological reasons. AQIM's main revenue sources, if not the majority of its activities altogether, revolved, until recently, at least, around drug smuggling, kidnapping, and contraband trafficking in otherwise legal commodities such as cigarettes, arms, and human migrants. Antil of IFRI argues the interdiction of trafficking, not terrorism, should be the priority for US and Western governments in the Sahel.[126] As we will see in Chapter 6, AQIM may have returned to its religious and ideological agenda, supporting the Islamist militias that occupied northern Mali in 2012. However, as we will also see, many of the interview respondents insisted radical Islam was merely a cover for AQIM's criminal activities.

Conclusion

The decisive period for the Algerian state and for Islam's role within it was the civil war, 1992–1998. By 2000, the secular-nationalist vision of the Algerian state had won out over the Islamist one as most Algerian Muslims accepted accommodation with the secular state and abandoned their ideals of shariah law and a purely nurturing role for women. Within the Islamist camp, national jihad seems to have won out over global jihad, though neither, as we have seen, proved very successful. In the early 2000s, the GSPC/AQIM shifted its focus from the old civil war battleground centered in northeastern Algeria to the Saharan reaches of Algeria and Mali. While citing global jihad as its motivation for this move, efforts seemed to be concentrated on organized criminal activity, including smuggling, contraband trafficking, human trafficking in labor migrants, and kidnapping

124 Le Vine, 2007, p. 94; Liao, 2005, passim.
125 IRIN. "Sahel: Traffickers targeting poorest countries." *Dakar*. April 23, 2007, p. 1.
126 "Fresh Thinking," 2010, p. 20.

for ransom, all the while using the global jihad agenda as a cover for the more economically motivated pursuits. Subsequent events seem to portend a return to focus on ideological motives, as AQIM and its affiliated Islamist militias took control of northern Mali during the Malian War of 2012–2013. The question of whether the proselytization of radical Islam or even the re-launch of the Caliphate in the Saharan core of North and West Africa was AQIM's primary motivation or if AQIM is merely another hybrid group, with its Islamist dressing essentially a legitimization and a cover for the group's economic and political ambitions, will be the focus of much of the rest of this book.

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Chapter 3
Mali: Democracy, Corruption, and Insurgency, 1991–2012

Introduction

After the so-called "third wave" of democracy[1] swept over the continent, Mali in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first appeared to be a rare success story in Africa. Aid donors, democracy activists, and academics were all taken in by regular election cycles, free press, and visible signs of economic development, at least in the major urban areas. Signs to the contrary were there, including low voter turnout, student unrest, and, especially, ethnic tensions, sometimes violent, in the country's Saharan and Sahelian reaches. But observers saw what they wanted to see, an island of political reform, religious tolerance, and economic growth on a continent that otherwise featured failed states, authoritarian governments, poverty, and outbursts of genocide. This chapter will first examine Mali's pro-democracy coup of 1991, its transition government, and the establishment of a democratic, pluralistic government that went through four regular elections cycles and nearly a fifth before the wheels came off the wagon in March of 2012. Then it will explain how Mali became a showcase of democracy and economic growth, and how that showcase image proved to be hollow, masking a sham democracy and badly skewed distribution of its limited benefits. The second part of the chapter will analyze the deeply entrenched corruption, in electoral politics, the civil administration, and the military, that ate away at the country's apparent stability and strength, leaving a near-empty shell. That shell collapsed in 2012 under the twin blows of a military coup in the capital and the loss of more than half of the country's national territory. The third part will discuss two ethnic-based secular-nationalist insurgencies in the north between 1990 and 2009 that threatened to give the lie to Mali's vaunted stability and record of tolerance. The first of these two insurrections, then known as the Northern Conflict, began in the last year of the 22-year authoritarian secular-nationalist dictatorship of Moussa Traoré. It continued through the pro-democracy coup, the transition government, and well into the first term of Mali's first democratically elected president, Alpha Oumar Konaré, ending with the highly symbolic, but now seemingly ironic, Flame of Peace celebration in Timbuktu in 1996. The second insurrection began in 2006 in the same troubled Adrar des Ifoghas region of northeastern Mali that

1 Huntington, Samuel P. *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991, passim.

had been the seat of the *Alfellaga* in the 1960s. Though shorter, more localized, and less bloody than the 1990 insurrection, the 2006 rebellion, as we will see, now appears to have been less a reprise of the 1990 rebellion than a preview of the 2012 insurrection that touched off the events that are part of the focus of this volume.

From independence in 1960 until the pro-democracy coup of 1991, Mali was a single-party state organized on African Socialist models,[2] as described in Chapter 1. The pre-coup regime was established in 1968 under the leadership of then-Lt. Moussa Traoré. Traoré's regime, the Second Republic, combined benign neglect and crony capitalism with elements of electoral politics within a single-party framework.[3] Unemployment, even among school leavers, was widespread, and poverty was abject. In the face of desperate conditions for the masses and blatant kleptocratic behavior by party and government officials, frustration with the regime grew. By the late 1980s it was common belief in Mali that the single-party state and its corruption and mismanagement were the causes of the country's poverty and stagnation. Pressure on Traoré to allow political openings boiled to the surface by October of 1990.[4]

Following months of popular agitation for multi-partyism and political openness, the "events" (*les événements*), as they are still known, began in March of 1991. For three days street protests, sometimes violent, by students, labor, and democracy activists raged across the country. Army troops and police fired on protestors, resulting in over 200 dead. Shocked by having to fire on their own people, senior army officers acted. They arrested "life president" Traoré on March 26, 1991 and proclaimed a transitional government. Lt.-Col. Amadou Toumani Touré, commander of elite "Red Beret" paratrooper regiment, led the coup d'état. Touré, affectionately known as "ATT," then surprised Africa and the world by announcing he would turn power over to an elected government pending the promulgation of a new democratic constitution. Touré's derring-do and seeming selflessness won him the love and admiration of the people; one of his supporters described him as "Zorro without the cape."[5] He proved his sincerity by bringing a civilian majority into his transition council, the Transitional Committee for Public Welfare (CTSP). The CTSP convened a brief national conference and drafted a new constitution authorizing political pluralism. Mali held its first elections under

2 Vengroff, Richard and Moctar Koné. "Mali: Democracy and Political Change," in Wiseman, John A. (ed.) *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa.* New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 45.

3 Vengroff and Koné, 1995, p. 46. During the Traoré regime, candidates were allowed to contest elections within the party, and some turnovers did take place.

4 Harmon, Stephen. "Religion and the Consolidation of Democracy in Mali: The Dog That Doesn't Bark." *Democracy and Development: Journal of West African Affairs,* 5 (1), 2005, p. 10.

5 Keita, Kalifa. *Conflict and Conflict Resolution in the Sahel: the Tuareg Insurgency in Mali. U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute,* 1998, p. 5. Quoting from the transitional government's finance minister Zoumana Sako, cited in Sennen Andriamirado, "Les premiers pas du nouveau regime," *Jeune Afrique*. April 10–16, 1991, pp. 13–14.

the new multi-party constitution in the winter and spring of 1992. The legislative elections were carried by the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA), one of the principal pro-democracy organizations of the coup period. ADEMA's leader, Alpha Konaré, won the presidential poll, ushering in Mali's Third Republic.[6]

By 1994, the Northern Conflict, about which more will be said below, along with other factors, including a 50 percent devaluation of Mali's currency, the CFA franc; chronic low voter turnout in elections; and the resignation of two prime ministers, severely threatened the democratic government's legitimacy.[7] The most intractable problem, however, was the "school crisis" (*la crise scolaire*).[8] The roots of the school crisis reach back to the colonial era. While the French promoted education and built many schools at various levels, they stressed acculturation and assimilation, presenting little material to support traditional values such as collectivity and respect for elders.[9] Beginning in 1991, violence erupted in Mali's secondary schools (*lycées*) between supporters and opponents of class boycotts.[10] Though supporting the democratic transition, Mali's student activists, represented by the Malian Association of Pupils and Students (AEEM), grew impatient with the slow pace of economic development, especially after the currency devaluation. AEEM, like many of Mali's opposition groups, lacked confidence in the democratic government and feared that Konaré's party, ADEMA, would simply fall back on

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6 Harmon, Stephen. "Civic Resurgence, Domestic Calm, and New Political Norms: Keys to Mali's Democratic Decade, 1991–2001," Unpublished paper presented September 29, 2001, pp. 4–6. The election was judged fair and legitimate by most national and international observers.

7 Lode, Kåre. (2002b) "The regional concertations process: Engaging the public" *Accord: Owning the Process, Public Participation in Peacemaking*. 2002, p. 1.

8 *La Voie*. "En phase de reconstruction, nous refussons l'opposition sterile," No. 1884, April 15, 1998, p. 4; Thièny, Ousmane. "Crise scolaire au Mali," December 22, 2000. *Afribone/Mali*, p. 1. All Malian governments since the coup had struggled with the school crisis, which became endemic throughout the country

9 Charlick, Robert B. and Susanna D. Wing. "The Political Economy of Education Policy Reform in Mali: A Stakeholders Analysis," September 30, 1988, p. 3; Report to USAID/Mali, Washington: Management Systems International. October, 1998, p. 3; Diakité, Drissa. "La crise scolaire au Mali," *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 9 (3) 6–28, 2000, pp. 7, 9; Sacko, Mohamed. "Emploi des jeunes: Le Président Att se reveille enfin," *Infomatin.* April 12, 2003, p. 1; UNPAN, N.D.; p. 6. *La Voie*, 1998, p. 5; Anais-Bamako, "Diagnostic du système éducatif malien," N.D., p. 1; Diakité, 2000, pp. 9–13. Other factors in the school crisis included the poor state of repair of most schools, inadequate sanitary facilities, an appalling lack of educational materials, and budget cuts imposed by structural adjustment programs

10 Lange, M.-F. "Elections in Mali, 1992–1997: Civil Society Confronted with the Rules of Democracy" in Abbink, J. and Gerti Hesseling. *Election Observation and Democratization in Africa.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000, pp. 235, 246; Bertrand, Monique. "Un an de transition politique: de la révolte a la troisième république," *Politique Africaine*, 47, 1992, p. 11.

single-party dominance.[11] Manifestations of the school crisis included walkouts and protests, even outbursts of violence such as the burning of school buildings, vehicles, and materials.[12] The agitation reached a new high in April of 1993 when students ravaged and set fire to the National Assembly. After two successive governments were forced from office by the crisis, President Konaré named Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK) as prime minister in 1994. Keita, Mali's current president, elected in a special election in 2013, was able to stabilize the situation temporarily, but not before closing many *lycées*.[13] As will be explained below, the school crisis was merely a symptom of a problem that was to prove even bigger and more threatening to Mali's democracy: endemic corruption, some of the worst examples of which could be found within the Ministry of Education. The school crisis and the Northern Conflict, along with other political problems including a serious election boycott in the 1997 election, severely tested the democratic regime's legitimacy.

Mali's Illusory Democracy

While the Northern Conflict, now referred to as the Tuareg rebellion of 1990–95, was known to the outside world, it seemed to pale in comparison to other contemporary African wars and ethnic conflicts, not the least of which was the Rwanda Genocide of 1994. The school crisis and many of Mali's other problems, while front page news in Mali, aroused little concern beyond its borders except in certain academic circles. Researcher and Sahel consultant Andrew Lebovich, noting that Mali was considered for the last 20 years a "poster child" for democracy, gives three reasons for this flawed perception: robust parliamentary institutions, a famously free press, and an apparently successful program of government decentralization. One UN observer in 2000 hailed Mali as an "island of tranquility in an ocean of wars." Timbuktu, so badly ravaged by the events of the recent Northern Conflict, was awarded UNESCO's Cities for Peace prize in 1998–1999. In 2002 Mali had a promising economy, averaging a 5 percent growth

11 Smith, Z.K. "Mali Elections," H-Africa, April 22, 1997, p. 1; Clark, 2000, p. 261; Fatton, Robert Jr. "Africa in the Age of Democratization: The Civic Limitations of Civil Society," *African Studies Review*, 38 (2), September 1995, p. 85.

12 Charlick and Wing, 1998, p. 2; Diakité, 2000, pp. 14–15. It will be remembered that student protesters during the events of March 1991 lynched the Traoré government's minister of education. Diakité feels that AEEM leaders tended to exaggerate their role in the événements, demanding recognition and reflecting arrogance (p. 12).

13 Diakité, 2000, p. 18. Keita also ran, unsuccessfully, for president in 2002. The school crisis peaked during the 1997–98 academic year, culminating in undemocratic actions by all parties, including preventive detentions for student leaders, and violent mob actions by students. Besides nearly wrecking the entire 1997–98 school year, the crisis also fueled a damaging election boycott by opposition parties in 1997 (Charlick and Wing, 1998, p. 2).

rate. Further, polls, no doubt taken in urban areas, registered two-thirds of Malians "satisfied with their democracy.[14] Typical of the West's misdiagnosis of Mali's democracy and economy was this analysis from 2010:

> Then there is Mali, which despite being a landlocked desert country has quietly achieved GDP growth of 5.5 percent per year since the mid-1990s. Infant mortality is down 25 percent, the primary school completion rate has doubled, and poverty has fallen by about one-third. Mali, too, has established a thriving multiparty democracy with competitive elections, a free press, better protection of civil liberties and political rights, less corruption, and stronger governance.[15]

On paper such praise, awards, and encouraging statistics made Mali a showcase of democracy on the continent. One aspect of Mali's democratic progress, hailed by international observers, was the relatively successful decentralization program implemented during President Konaré's second term. The decentralization program was partly motivated by the need for a response to the continuing demands for independence on the part of the northern regions, and partly because the legacy of over-centralized government stemming from the one-party state during the dictatorship was still fresh in people's minds. Decentralization "served to grant autonomy to the northern regions and deflect calls for independence."[16] Promises of decentralization for the north had been made during the last year of the Traoré regime, but Konaré expanded the concept nationwide. Local commune councils, originally established during the last years of the colonial government, were given, for example, the ability to negotiate with NGOs for aid in their commune so funds would not be siphoned off by the central government's bureaucrats. Communes were to elect their own councils, which were given limited control over three areas: health, education, and some infrastructure. Communal elections were held from June 1998 to June 1999, and by mid-1999 some 680 Malian communes had elected council representatives and a mayor. High levels of representation by opposition parties boded well for Mali's democracy, especially after the damaging opposition boycott of the 1997 elections.[17] But though a stable multiparty system

14 Lebovich, Andrew. "Mali's Bad Trip: Field notes from the West African drug trade," *Foreign Policy*. 15 March, 2013, p. 2; Boukhari, Sophie. "Mali: A Flickering Flame," *UNESCO Courier*. January 2000, p. 1; Whitehouse, Bruce. "'The Power is in the Street': The Context of State Failure in Mali," Blogpost, Africaplus. April 19, 2013, p. 1. Official growth rates were fairly consistent throughout the 20-year period of the democracy.

15 Radelet, Steven C. *Emerging Africa: How 17 Countries are Leading the Way*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2010, p. 10.

16 Seeley, Jennifer C. "A political analysis of decentralisation: coopting the Tuareg threat in Mali," *J. Modern African Studies*, 39 (3), September 2001, pp. 500–501, 516**.**

17 Seeley, 2001, pp. 500–17.

was established in Mali, it saw little consolidation of state institutions. The system resulted in what critics called a "procedural democracy."[18]

The Showcase Proves Hollow

The veil concealing Mali's democratic shortcomings was torn away with brutal swiftness by the events of March 2012. First came news of the coup d'état against the regime of the once popular and admired Alpha Toumani Touré (ATT), Mali's second democratically elected president. Then came the news that the fourth Tuareg rebellion since independence was under way and had been a factor in the coup. Within days came the jarring revelation that the Malian army had been driven from the north and that Mali's three northern regional capitals, Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu, had fallen to the main Tuareg rebel group the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). Shock followed shock, and by early June came the news that the MNLA itself had been driven from those same cities by two hitherto little known Islamist militias called Ansar Dine and the Movement for Tawhid and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). How had Mali's army, the recipient of so much American military aid and training under the PSI and through programs of the TSCTP, been so shamelessly routed? How had Mali's vaunted democracy been so easily overturned by an ad-hoc band of low-ranking officers who formed a junta under Capt. Amadou Sanogo? And why did the Malian people seem so little concerned over the sudden loss of their democracy? Where were the popular demonstrations demanding a return to constitutional rule and the restoration of ATT? An intense desire to answer these questions became my motivation for writing this volume. The answers, when they came, proved more depressing than the news itself. Mali's democracy had been a sham, its institutions and economy eaten away by endemic corruption, lack of transparency, and a general abandonment of the rule of law.

Malians let their democracy slip away because the benefits it delivered had been limited to an urban political class and its partners at the upper levels of business and the economy. The people had become disillusioned with a democratic process that had not delivered on its promises. Villas were going up all over town, while ordinary people, including low-level bureaucrats, unemployed school leavers, petty merchants, and rural farmers, struggled to stretch their unrealistically low salaries and earnings from day to day. Journalist Peter Beaumont, using the term "procedural democracy," said democratic rule in Mali had been "neither socially nor regionally inclusive." He derided the West's "blithe acceptance and promotion of the 'procedural' version of democracy developed by the country's upper and middle classes in Bamako." He argued that Mali needed real democracy, not the

18 International Crisis Group. "Mali: Avoiding Escalation," *Africa Report N°189* – July 18, 2012, p. 20.

"neo-liberal" version designed only for the elites.[19] When I spoke with ordinary citizens in Mali, it soon became apparent that the decay had set in in the early years of the democracy; corruption had become worse under the democracy than it had been under the dictatorship. A Malian administrator of an international NGO, speaking of the early 1990s, said, "The leaders of the early democracy failed in their responsibility of maintaining the state and its functions and regulations. After the pro-democracy coup, people did not understand democracy. They thought they could do as they pleased." She cited as an example the widespread flaunting of Mali's then-recently enacted helmet law for motorcyclists, which was abandoned because of unenforceability. She spoke also of the large numbers of squatters on vacant land near the capital. She said neither of these situations would have been tolerated under the Traoré regime.[20] I heard this phrase "do as they pleased" over and over when I asked people why the democracy had failed. A Songhai woman from Gao who works as a government bureaucrat in Bamako said the democracy built by Alpha (Konaré) was a "false democracy" where everyone felt they could do what they wanted. There was no oversight or control. She continued, saying that ATT came along (elected president in 2002) and found a corrupt system in place. The political "clan" in power was corrupted by the *magouille*, a form of corruption to be discussed below. She added that ATT, an independent, had no party to support him, so he had to work with those already in power.[21] An International Crisis Group report supported these comments, saying ATT's officials benefitted from "non-transparent and imbalanced use" of aid funds, especially US-supplied counter-terrorism aid.[22]

A former student organizer of AEEM spoke to me at length about the problem of corruption under the democratic regime. Discussing Mali's "sham" democracy, he complained it had proven impossible to transform a dictatorship into a democracy by the magic of the ballot. "Though the elections are rigged, they are validated by the imprimatur of international observers. A certificate of authenticity is offered to an electoral process that does not adhere to the people directly concerned." He said the people realized their democracy had been a "façade," adding that most people believe the corruption worsened under the democracy. He noted that the free press in Mali, much lauded, was weakened by the fact that most press organs, especially newspapers, were controlled by political parties.[23] The International Crisis Group broadly supported this analysis, saying, "The lure of quick and easy money has led prominent individuals to abandon any vision of sustainable development for the country and to divert [*détourner*] much of the international aid flowing into

19 Beaumont, Peter. "Terrorism is just one of many scourges to beset the people of Mali for decades," *The Guardian.* January 19, 2013.

20 Interview 109 (Malian World Bank staffer residing in Bamako).

21 Interview 108 (Songhai woman from Gao, works as IT specialist in Bamako), Part 2.

22 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 7.

23 Interview 110 (Former student organizer from Macina, resides in Bamako), Part 3.

the country."[24] Another long-time Mali observer said Mali's democracy was being eroded by weak rule of law. People were being pushed off land they had rightfully purchased in and around Bamako, and the courts could do nothing.[25]

As mentioned above, signs the democracy was in trouble were there, some of them from the beginning. Notable among these was the chronically low voter turnout for Mali's elections, including presidential elections. In Mali's first-ever contested presidential election in April of 1992, the turnout was only 23.6 percent in the first round. While this figure could be dismissed as an anomaly, or perhaps because Malians were not used to genuine balloting procedures, low voter turnouts persisted throughout the 20-year run of the democratic regime. Over that period, Malian voter turnouts remained among the lowest in Africa, at times not more than 20 percent, and rarely more than 40 percent of eligible voters.[26] As will be shown below, these consistently low voter turnouts provided an opening for systematic corruption in election balloting, with apathetic voters encouraged to sell their votes, often for nominal sums of money. Mali's low voter turnouts were known to democracy activists and academics alike, and were a source of concern. But most hoped that, despite the poor rates at which eligible voters exercised their new rights, the institutions and workings of Mali's democracy were nonetheless sound. They were not. Perhaps the two greatest threats to Malian democracy over the terms of the two elected presidents, Konaré and ATT, were: 1) the systematic corruption in government, the economy, and even the security forces, and 2) the rebellions by northern independence movements, both Tuareg and Arab, which disrupted much of the 20-year term of the democracy. These two persistent threats to Mali's democratic governance will be the subject of the next two sections of this chapter.

Entrenched Corruption

It is no secret there has been widespread corruption in Mali, as in most African countries, for some time. During my recent research trip, I heard over and over two things about Malian corruption: first, that it had gotten worse—according to some, far worse—since the advent of Mali's democracy; second, that it was the endemic, entrenched corruption that had caused such disillusionment with Mali's democracy on the part of the ordinary people. Naturally, I wanted to find out why corruption had gotten so bad and how this corruption had damaged people's confidence in democratic institutions. I asked many of my interview respondents about corruption and its causes and consequences, but I sought out two particular respondents specifically to ask about corruption, as opposed to the subject of the conflict in the north, which was the subject of most of my interviews. The former

24 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 20.

25 Whitehouse, Blog April 19, 2013, p. 1.

26 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 20. Diakité, Mountaga. "Mali—une' démocratie' contre le peuple," Unpublished document, December 13, 2012, p. 9.

student organizer spoke largely about the nature of Malian corruption in general, as well as the impact of corruption in specific areas such as the educational system and health care. The other interview respondent, an editor of a Bamako weekly, a journalist who had made a career of investigating corruption, spoke primarily about corruption in electoral politics, but also in the granting and fulfilling of government contracts. When I asked the former student leader about the mentality that allowed so many people to behave in corrupt ways, he responded that it was the mentality of personal interest over public interest, adding, "the people were not prepared for democracy," by which he meant people were not prepared to subordinate their personal interests and desires to the common good, the interest of the state. He continued, "This is a system that leads to underdevelopment, not to development. The wealthy and the intellectuals continue to govern the country, but they will never lead the people out of poverty because of the mentality of self-interest." He confirmed that corruption had worsened under the democracy, adding that "under Moussa [Traoré] there were at least some convictions [for corruption]," while under Alpha Konaré there were almost none. Things got even worse under ATT.[27] Yet another interview respondent who worked for the state broadcasting system confirmed the corruption got worse under the democracy because "people mistook democracy for license to do as they pleased." By this he meant that, for people in a position to divert state funds, it was acceptable to do so, adding that people stole more money than they did under the dictatorial regime of the UDPM.[28] Giorgio Blundo and Jean-Pier Olivier de Sardan in a 2001 study of day-to-day corruption in three West African nations—Benin, Niger, and Senegal—likewise noticed that varying degrees of democratic transition in those countries had not ended the practice of generalized corruption; indeed, they found, it allowed it to worsen.[29]

Research on corruption and fraud is necessarily difficult, and it is often hard to find clear proof of the degree and extent of such activities. The researcher must often rely on hearsay evidence and on what people believe to be true, as opposed to what has been proven to be true by verifiable evidence. Despite these difficulties, I have identified four types of corruption that appear to be widespread in Mali, particularly in governance and the exercise of power. The first is what people call *magouille*, which means payments or gifts, often of small value, for goods or services that ought to be dispensed for free or at nominal prices or for legitimate fees. These can range from a small under-the-table payment to a functionary to get a document stamped to the payment of substantial bribes to get a position in the army or in some other aspect of government employment. Second is diversion of funds (*détourement de fonds*), typically public funds raised from taxes on individuals and enterprises. Diversion of public moneys can rangefrom

27 Interview 110, Part 3.

28 Interview 117 (ORTM official).

29 Blundo, Giorgio and Jean-Pierre de Sardan. "La corruption quotidienne en Afrique de l'Ouest," *Politique africaine*, 83, October 2001, p. 11.

small misappropriations of petty cash to massive theft of funds that are supposed to be used to finance major areas of government and public service, such as education and even defense. Third is nepotism and favoritism, whereby people in power bypass normal civil service controls and appoint relatives or cronies or fellow political party members to positions of responsibility, large and small. Fourth is the practice of kickbacks on major projects and schemes, many of which are themselves illegal or quasi-legal. These kickbacks can and often do occur in the context of the solicitation of sealed bids (*appel d'offres*) or in the exercise of eminent domain (*préemption*).

Blundo and Olivier de Sardan identified seven basic forms of corruption in their 2001 study. Some of these seven forms more or less matched the types of corruption I encountered in my research. What Blundo and Oliver de Sardan call *le piston* corresponds with what I have called favoritism. What they call *la retribution indue d'un service public* appears similar to what Malians call *la magouille.* And what they call *le détournement* is, of course, what I am calling "diversion of funds." Blundo and Olivier de Sardan found such corruption in the three countries to be pervasive, generalized, and entrenched in the social and political culture, as I did in Mali.[30] This endemic corruption proved to be the fatal flaw in Malian democracy. It was, I am arguing, the failure of Mali's democratically elected leaders to rein in fraud and corruption that caused the people to lose confidence not only in Mali's democracy, but in democratic institutions themselves. It is for this reason, I feel, that the Malian people did not fight more strenuously to defend their democracy when ATT was overthrown in the military coup of March 22, 2012.

To be sure, all of these forms of corruption and more are commonly found in the so-called developed countries, including the United States. The US, especially in certain states, is notorious for fraud and nepotism in the process of sealed bids for government contracts at many levels of government. But the difference in Mali, and evidently in other West African nations as well, is the degree to which these forms of corruption are generalized and endemic throughout society. Indeed, it is difficult to survive and raise a family in Mali without at least some participation in or acquiescence to such forms of fraud and corruption. It is the degree and pervasiveness of such corruption in Mali that distinguishes it from corruption in the United States, for example. Corruption in Mali is of such an extent that even those people who would prefer to live by honest pay for honest work find they cannot do so without falling further and further behind. Meanwhile, they see their neighbors, co-workers, and supervisors advancing by participating in corruption. Even my driver commented, "Corruption starts at the top. Someone sees his boss is stealing, so he too steals." This situation has caused frustration and resignation among the people. And it is the belief that corruption and fraud has only increased under the democratic regime that has, I believe, caused Malians to lose faith in democratic governance. This loss of confidence in the democratic system has resulted in such forms of malaise as chronic low voter turnout and the willingness

30 Blundo and Olivier de Sardan, 2001, pp. 10, 12.

of many Malians to effectively sell their votes for small sums of money or gifts. As one critic of Malian corruption put it, "Many Malians feel they need 5,000 CFA today more than they need democracy tomorrow."[31]

Corruption in Electoral Politics and Campaign Financing

The NGO administrator I interviewed tried to explain how the problem of corruption, especially corruption in electoral politics, became a serious problem as soon as the democratic constitution went into effect in the early 1990s. New political parties, she said, formed up, and they needed funding. They got funding by selling influence. Therefore, the sale of votes, including votes by elected deputies in the assembly as well as the sale of votes by ordinary individuals, became commonplace. "In Mali there are over 100 political parties. None of them can raise 5,000 votes easily. When a member of a party gets a post, he tries to strengthen his party by using the power of his post. He sells influence, or he gives jobs to party members or supporters. These are some of the ways that the democracy led to deepening corruption." She added there is no transparency in the finance of political parties. Political parties receive some state funding in addition to donations from private supporters, but there is no transparency in either the solicitation or the disposition of these funds.[32] It is not uncommon, other sources told me, for a supporter making a contribution to a political party or a candidate to walk into the candidate's office and place a sack of banknotes his desk. This lack of transparency invites corruption and diversion of funds.

While corruption and fraud are a part of many aspects of Malian governance and public life, the problem of campaign finance seems to be a good place to begin trying to understand the pervasive nature of corruption and also, perhaps, to begin a process of comprehensive reform of the political system in Mali. It is with fraud and lack of transparency in election campaign finance that much of the rest of the political corruption in Mali begins. Malian elections are based on a five-year cycle. Every five years new elections are held at the municipal, legislative, and presidential levels. The outside world viewed the fact that Mali succeeded in holding elections on this schedule every five years through four complete election cycles, a rarity in Africa, as evidence that Mali's democratic reforms had taken hold. When President Alpha Konaré voluntarily stepped down from the presidency in 2002 after completing his two constitutionally allowed mandates and without declaring a state of emergency or attempting to amend the constitution to allow himself more time, he was succeeded by another constitutionally elected president not of Alpha's party ADEMA. Many observers, including myself, remarked that Mali had passed Samuel Huntington's "two election test." This test holds that when a duly elected president has been peacefully replaced by another duly elected president not of the previous president's party, it can be said that

31 Interview 112 (Editor of a Bamako weekly newspaper) Part 1.

32 Interview 109.

democracy has taken hold.[33] In other words notwithstanding certain problems, including chronically low voter turnout and a serious election boycott in 1997, the outside world, hoping that democratic institutions were finally taking root in Africa, saw in Mali an example of successful democratic reform. But the serious faults that underlay Mali's electoral system, including major flaws in patterns of election finance, largely escaped the scrutiny of western journalists and scholars.

One problem was that deputies to the national assembly quickly became beholden to political parties rather than to their constituents. They were dependent on their party leaders for financial support, including financial support for their campaigns. Therefore they tended to respond to the needs of their party rather than to the needs of the people whom they represented. A second problem was that parties themselves also needed funding for their electoral campaigns. As a result, they began to trade political influence for financial contributions from wealthy individuals or groups. The third and perhaps most serious problem was the widespread purchase of votes by political parties and candidates. This problem of endemic vote buying was related to Mali's chronic low voter turnout. With turnout for legislative elections often as low as 20 percent, there is a large pool of potential voters who do not care enough to vote for a candidate, or perhaps they have little faith any candidate would do anything to help them. In any case, these eligible voters had votes that could be bought by candidates, often at bargain prices, reportedly as low as 5,000 CFA.[34] The Bamako weekly editor and corruption investigator described some of the ways votes are bought:

> Mayoral candidates buy votes easily. They typically pay as little 5,000 CFA per vote. This is a common practice. This practice used to be facilitated by the use of multiple ballots. When the voter arrived at the polling place he would be given a ballot for each candidate. He would put the ballot for the candidate he wanted in the ballot box and throw the rest in the trash. A candidate would encourage people to bring the unused ballots to their offices to show that the voter had voted for him. Then he would give the voter 5,000 CFA. Electoral reform activists asked for the use of single ballots, with all the candidates listed on a single ballot [*bulletin unique*]. The use of single ballots started in 2007 and has continued until today. This reform has diminished voter fraud considerably. The same reform was effected at all the different levels of elections, municipal, assembly, and presidential election levels. A related problem is the automatic inscription of voters at age 18. But only about 20 percent of voters typically go to the mayoral offices to get their voter ID cards, which must be shown at the polling place to vote. The other 80 percent of cards are not taken by the voters who are eligible to take them. The cards are distributed at the mayoral offices, sometimes at the office of the *chef de quartier*. Politicians contact young men

33 Huntington, 1991, p. 266.

34 Interview 110, Part 3. In some cases votes are bought for as little as CFA 2,000, or even for T-shirts or packets of tea.

> and ask them if they have drawn their card. If they have not, they say, "No problem. I will give you a card. You get a fake identity card in the name on the card that I give you, with your own photograph, and you go vote, and I will pay you 5,000 CFA." Sometimes the fake voters also cheat the candidates and receive their 5,000 CFA from several candidates, promising each that he will vote for him.[35]

When I asked the journalist what happens when there are complaints of voter fraud, I was told these complaints are handled by the Constitutional Court (*Commission électorale nationale indépendante*, CENI). However, it appears there are flaws in the design and selection process of the judges for the Constitutional Court as well.

> This is another problem that is very serious, though I don't have proof. Complaints of vote fraud and electoral corruption are received and handled by the Constitutional Court. There is believed to be widespread corruption among the judges of the Constitutional Court. They have been known to annul hundreds of thousands of votes. There are nine judges on the Constitutional Court. Three are chosen by the president of the republic, three by the president of the assembly, and three by the *conseil supérieur da la magistrature*. But the judges of the Constitutional Court are not confirmed by any elected body. They serve a term of seven years, not renewable. If, for example, the president of the republic and the president of the assembly are of the same party, the result is that six judges out of the nine judges are picked by the same party. The manner of designating Constitutional Court judges, therefore, is seriously flawed and invites corruption.[36]

An underlying problem that goes a long way towards enabling electoral fraud is the massive use of false documents in Mali, from birth certificates to ID cards to passports. These and other documents are routinely falsified for various purposes of evasion, not just voter fraud. The issuing authorities commonly accept a small bribe to produce a falsified document. This false documentation facilitates of the problem mentioned above of people using unclaimed voter registration forms by getting false ID cards. In the case of passports, for example, not only are false Malian passports easily available, but even false diplomatic passports can be obtained for a somewhat higher fee. The problem of false Malian diplomatic passports came to light some years ago when a group of Malians living in New York and working as street vendors were found to be traveling on diplomatic passports. When detained and questioned by the police, they presented their false documents and requested diplomatic immunity.[37] A Malian friend of mine freely discussed with me his plans to help a female relative obtain a visa for travel to the

35 Interview 112, Part 1.
36 Interview 112, Part 1.
37 Interview 112, Part 1.

United States through the use of a false passport. He told me the US Embassy staff in Bamako is well aware Malian identification documents, including passports and birth certificates, are routinely falsified. The widespread sale of false passports is by no means limited to Mali. Substantial evidence exists indicating similar problems obtain in other African countries and in some Latin American countries.[38]

A further problem related to campaign finance involves the use of cash not only to pay for campaigns but also for the use of assembly deputies for work-related expenses.

> The politicians in power are looking to enrich themselves. They vote their own budgets. The money is held in cash in vaults at the assembly itself. There is great temptation to misuse the money. There is a total lack of transparency. The cashier at the Assembly can give his friends extra funds. He can withhold payment for the utilities at the assembly building itself. They steal this money for themselves. When the bills go unpaid, the Minister of Finance issues extra supplementary extra-budgetary funds to cover the arrears. This money is issued also in cash. Much of it is stolen. Access to stolen funds like these depends also on party loyalties. They will not let members of other parties participate in these activities. Also, they keep party members loyal for things like votes on legislation by threatening to not let them into the trough. Audits of these cash payments are often delayed by politicians to avoid exposure of their theft. The government can go for five to seven years, sometimes 10 years without an audit.[39]

The former student organizer echoed these sentiments regarding the corruption mentality associated with election finance and problems with cash dispersals on the part of elected assembly deputies, saying, "The Assembly, which should have been a check on the abuse of power by the president and the government, failed in its duties. The members were beholden to their parties who paid for their votes. They were loyal to their party bosses, not to their constituency."[40] One outside observer notes that even some moneys derived from ransom payments made to AQIM cells for the release of kidnapped hostages have found their way into the hands of corrupt Malian officials and have been used in election campaign financing. He specifically noted that municipal elections in Tarkint, north of Gao on the road to Adrar des Ifoghas, have been contaminated by ransom and drug money.[41] These problems are serious when taken individually. Collectively, they are potentially fatal to an already fragile electoral system. And all of them were partially or entirely related to election campaign finance. For these and other reasons, the issue of

38 See, for example, Kamal Sadiq. *Paper Citizens: How Illegal Immigrants Acquire Citizenship in Developing Countries*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

39 Interview 112, Part 1.

40 Interview 110, Part 3.

41 Lacher, Wolfram. "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahara-Sahel Region." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Paper. September 13, 2012, p. 9.

campaign finance reform would seem to be a good place to start a comprehensive political reform program. However, any such program of reform, comprehensive or otherwise, must be backed up by real prosecutions of scofflaws and violators. There has been great reluctance on the part of even the highest officials to press for prosecutions even in known cases of fraud and corruption.

Nor will laws and sanctions on candidates and party leaders be sufficient to bring about electoral reform. Members of the voting public will have to be educated and informed and obliged to take responsibility for themselves and for their governance. Such public awareness and sensibility would greatly reduce the temptation for individuals to sell their precious votes, for example. The right of individuals to vote and the principle of "one man, one vote" were purchased, and are being purchased, at a dear cost in blood and struggle on the part of thousands of patriots, not only in Mali but in countries around the world. Many countries are still far from allowing their citizens such rights. These rights should be defended and protected not only by governments and leaders, but by individuals as well. A quote attributed to the early twentieth-century German playwright and director Bertolt Brecht takes the apathetic, apolitical citizen to task:

> The worst illiterate is the political illiterate, he doesn't hear, doesn't speak, nor participates in the political events. He doesn't know the cost of life, the price of the bean, of the fish, of the flour, of the rent, of the shoes and of the medicine, all depends on political decisions. The political illiterate is so stupid that he is proud and swells his chest saying that he hates politics. The imbecile doesn't know that, from his political ignorance is born the prostitute, the abandoned child, and the worst thieves of all, the bad politician, corrupted and flunky of the national and multinational companies.[42]

While the larger share of blame for corruption and the evils it causes must be reserved for the corrupt politician and party leader who abuses his public trust to enrich himself and his cronies, a substantial portion of the blame must also be laid at the feet of the individual who, whether through apathy or venality, either turns his back or allows himself to be bought or compromised by the corrupt leader.

Corruption in the Civil Administration

The interview respondents confirmed that corruption in Mali, though commonplace under the Traoré dictatorship, became institutionalized under the Konaré administration. Examples included "peeking" at sealed bids for contracts and false qualifications placed on bidders, effectively eliminating competition, in the supposedly open bidding process (*appel d'offre*). While such practices were known under the Traoré regime, the cost of securing a rigged-bid contract went way up

42 Goodreads. http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/541442-the-worst-illiterate-is-the-political-illiterate-he-doesn-t-hear.

under the Konaré administration.[43] Malian civil servants arrive at work late and leave early, and they routinely take bribes of 10,000 CFA or less for a stamp on an official document. Positions in customs, tax offices, military schools, and national police are commonly sold to candidates. While nearly all Malians express disgust with this system, they nonetheless shrug and seem to accept it.[44] When asked why there was such disillusionment with democracy on the part of ordinary Malians, one interview respondent, the former student organizer, answered, "People are tired of the *magouille*, the nepotism, the favoritism, and the *laxisme*, letting people do as they pleased [*laissez faire*]. These things prevented the establishment of democracy in Mali."[45] This section will describe briefly some of the various forms of corruption common in Mali, including the *magouille*, favoritism and nepotism, diversion (*détournement*) of funds, and various forms of land sale fraud, including the sale of plots of land to multiple buyers, giving examples of each and showing how they damaged people's confidence in democratic institutions.

The *magouille*, the student organizer said, is generated by low, unchanging salaries that are not commensurate with the rising cost of living. It is facilitated by the endemic lack of transparency. He blamed, perhaps unfairly, ATT for the debut of favoritism, nepotism, *laxisme*, and mediocrity. An example of favoritism under ATT, he said, was the appointment of his close associate Abdoulaye Touré as president of the National Youth Council (CNJ). Touré was too old for the position under CNJ rules, and he was an outsider who had not come up through the Council.[46] The NGO administrator concurred, saying, "'*petite corruption*' is caused partly by low salaries for public servants, including police. They too need money for their children's supplementary courses or for extra payments to doctors and administrators in hospitals [see below]." She added that two sectors most in need of reform are education and health care. These are the sectors that receive the largest shares of state budgetary funds.[47] The former student leader spoke at length on the problem of corruption in education. He said shortcomings in infrastructure, including overbooking of classes, not enough desks, classes being held in theaters and even stadiums, lack of proper libraries, and too few computer labs, create the conditions for corruption. Partly because of overcrowded classrooms and broken microphones, students must pay their professors for private lessons and supplementary texts in order to pass the exams. The professors go along with this system, he added, because they too receive low salaries. Scholarship moneys are not paid out at the proper time; rather, they are commonly withheld until the end of the school year. Education officials give these funds to businessmen so they can

43 Interview 112, Part 4.

44 Whitehouse, February 28, 2013, p. 1.

45 Interview 110, Part 2.

46 Diakité, 2012, p. 2; Interview 110. Part 2.

47 Interview 109. My driver and I were stopped often, some times more than once on the same day, for some minor violation, and then let go for a small bribe, usually 2,000 CFA.

turn a profit before disbursing them to students. As a result, students must borrow and live on credit until their scholarship payments arrive. Faculty salaries are also held back, especially the payments for overtime hours. Sometimes faculties go on strike, as do students, which has led to failed school years (*annés blanches*).[48] The NGO administrator confirmed the practice of bureaucrats, especially in the Ministry of Education, investing withheld funds to turn a profit before releasing them to their intended recipients.[49] As mentioned above, student strikes, partly caused by such abuse, were part of the school crisis. Some of these abuses, resulting in widespread anger, were evident under the Traoré regime. Unrest among students who had not received their scholarships contributed to the turmoil that characterized *les évenements* that preceded the coup that ousted Traoré in March 1991. These events included the lynching of the Minister of Education by an angry mob outside his home.[50]

The student leader described a number of corrupt practices he claimed were routine. He said in the health care sector doctors are paid by the state to work at the state-run hospitals, like Point G and Gabriel Touré. Private clinics, however, are not state controlled. Doctors often leave their posts at state-run hospitals to go to the private clinics where they can earn outside money. The poor cannot afford these clinics. Even at state-run hospitals, doctors and administrators often charge illegal supplementary fees for scarce medications or special procedures.[51] Perhaps the most egregious example of corruption within the Ministry of Health was the scandal concerning the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. This fund gave over $120 million to fight diseases in Mali, especially AIDS and malaria. According to a US Embassy official, some $40 million was stolen by Ministry of Health officials. This scandal is illustrative not only of the level of corruption within the Ministry of Health but also of how diversion of funds (*détournement*) works in Mali. The Health Ministry already had a reputation for fraud, including *magouille*, and diversion of funds, using, among other methods, a system of falsified receipts and orders. Within this scandal, the most shocking aspect was an entire testing lab that was billed and paid for but never built. False orders for construction materials were made, and false receipts for payments were issued by the contracting agencies. Not only was the money to build the lab stolen, but the fake lab issued false orders for materials and charged against the funds for tests that were never done at the lab that was never built. A damning report

48 Interview 110, Part 2.

49 Interview 109.

50 Dillon, Karin. "The Touareg Rebellion: Causes, Consequences, and Prospects for Peace in Northern Mali," Unpublished MA Thesis, American University's School of International Service, 2007, p. 92; Harmon, Stephen. "Civic Resurgence, Domestic Calm, and New Political Norms: Keys to Mali's Democratic Decade, 1991–2001." Unpublished paper presented to the 7th Annual Meeting of the Mid-America Alliance for African Studies, September 29, 2001, p. 10.

51 Interview 110, Part 2.

was issued by the Global Fund in 2010, and two of the grants made to Mali, totaling some $26 million, were suspended in December of that year. According to journalist John Heilprin, only $4 million were misappropriated from these two grants, much of it for bogus "training events," for which "signatures were forged on receipts for per diem payments, lodging and travel expense claims." Heilprin adds that 15 Malian officials were eventually arrested in connection with this case.[52] An investigation by the Global Fund Inspector General "uncovered fraud by senior officials working for grant implementers, through submission of false invoices, creation of fake bid documents and overcharging for goods and services, particularly in relation to training activities."[53] The Global Fund grant scandal and other examples of diversion of funds turned the people against ATT.[54]

ATT had established the Office of the Auditor General (*Bureau du vérificateur général,* BVG) in 2003. The auditor general, a sort of "anti-corruption czar," was modeled after the Canadian Auditor General.[55] He was supposed to audit the different ministries and agencies in order to guarantee transparency in the dispersal and disposition of funds. The first *vérificateur general* (VG) was Sidi Dosso Diarra. The VG was appointed to serve a nonrenewable seven-year term with a high salary. His responsibility was to issue a report for each agency (*direction*), and a general report that covered all of the individual reports. The first general report of the VG was issued in 2005 and subsequent general reports were issued each year until 2010, when Diarra's term ended. The VG was supposed to control, in particular, diversion of funds. More importantly, he was supposed to be independent, reporting directly to the President of the Republic. The VG determined that in the aggregate some 314 billion CFA ($479 million) had been wrongly diverted by corrupt officials in the various ministries and agencies. He made recommendations regarding several individuals, some high-ranking officials, whom he felt should be charged with fraud.[56] The prosecutor general (*procuradeur général*) issued indictments against these individuals, but ATT declined to press the charges or make arrests. In a televised speech, the president said he would not press charges because it would be wrong to humiliate heads of families by arresting them, which would result in the destitution of these families.[57] The efforts of the VG were similarly neutralized by "influential politicians" in

52 Heilprin, J. "Fraud Plagues Global Health Fund." January 23, 2011. http://www.aolnews.com/2011/01/23/fraud-plagues-global-fund-to-fight-aids-tuberculosis-and-malaria/; Interview 115 (US Embassy official, American).

53 "Global Fund suspends two malaria grants, terminates TB grant to Mali." December 7, 2010. p.1. http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/mediacenter/newsreleases/2010–12–07_Global_Fund_suspends_two_malaria_grants_terminates_TB_grant_to_Mali/

54 Interview 110, Part 1.

55 Whitehouse blog, April 19, 2013, p. 3.

56 Interview 117 (ORTM official); Interview 110 (Diakité) Part 1.

57 Interview 117 (ORTM official); Interview 115; Interview 110, Part 1.

his investigation of embezzlement of *Office du Niger* funds.[58] Another serious example of diversion of funds was within the rice initiative (*initiative riz*), which was administered by Modibo Sidibé. Sidibé was accused of embezzling some 10 billion CFA from the rice initiative. He was one of the officials recommended for indictment by the VG, Diarra, but he, like the others, was never arrested.[59] The Malian NGO administrator said the VG Diarra failed in his responsibility by not reforming important sectors like education and health care. The VG used corrupt people to work with him, people suspected of corruption themselves.[60] Given that high-ranking public officials could steal such enormous sums of money (by Malian standards) with impunity, while ordinary people struggled to make ends meet with hopelessly inadequate salaries, it becomes increasingly easy to see why Malians became disgusted with their leaders and disenchanted with democratic institutions.

When asked whether politicians at the local level were as corrupt as at the ministerial level, my journalist source replied that the mayors of the communes are frequently very corrupt.[61] The commune system of local jurisdiction and government was established, as mentioned above, in the last years of colonial rule. Rural communes bear some resemblance to what we would call counties. The larger urban centers often comprise several communes, smaller in area than rural communes, but of similar population. It is the mayors of the urban communes that are the most notorious for corrupt practices. The mayors wield various powers that can be turned to corrupt purposes. These powers include the "preemption" of land, a process similar to what we would call eminent domain. And, like urban mayors in the US, they have the power to let out contracts on the basis of competitive bids (*appel d'offre*).[62] Under the single-party regimes of Mobido Keita and Moussa Traoré, the mayors of the communes were more closely supervised by the central government than under the democracy. However, as a result of the decentralization process that took hold nationwide in the mid-90s after the end of the Northern Conflict, local government was given greater independence and less oversight. As mentioned above, the decentralization process allowed communes to elect their own commune councils, over which mayors presided. These commune councils were permitted to negotiate directly with NGOs for development aid grants, and they also were given limited authority in the areas of health care, education, and infrastructure.[63]

New infrastructure projects such as roads or sewer lines often involve the preemption of land. When land is preempted by the mayors of communes, it is divided into parcels (*superficies*). Often more land than is actually needed for the infrastructure project is preempted under these eminent domain-type proceedings.

58 Whitehouse blog, April 19, 2013, p. 3.
59 Interview 110, Part 1.
60 Interview 109.
61 Interview 112, Part 4.
62 Interview 112, Part 4.
63 Seeley, 2001, pp. 500–17.

The extra parcels are sold to developers or to individuals. Some parcels, according to the respondent, are used to pay off the corrupt judges and officials charged with oversight of these proceedings to prevent such practices.[64] Perhaps the most heartbreaking example of corruption I encountered in my research in Mali involves what happens to the parcels sold to individuals. Unbelievably, mayors often sell the same parcel of land to more than one individual, commonly to two or three, but sometimes to as many as 10. Each individual believes he is the sole legal owner of the parcel.[65] He may hire a mason to begin developing the property, only to find another "owner" has already sent his mason to the piece and is already in the process of laying foundations and building walls. This is, in fact, how such victimized buyers often discover they have been cheated. When they complain, they find local judges and officials are not willing to intervene for fear their own complicity in the land deal may be revealed. The widow of an old friend of mine explained to me, in tears, how she had been cheated in this manner. The victims, when they learn they have been defrauded, that their dream of owning their own home may have eluded them, are devastated. It is difficult to imagine a more cruel form of corruption. And the fact that these thefts have been perpetrated by duly elected officials who are supposed to protect their constituents makes it all the easier to understand why so many ordinary Malians have lost faith in democracy.

Other forms of corruption involve fraud in the bidding process for contracts (*appel d'offre*). For example, mayors, and other officials, often violate the seals on sealed bids to allow rival bidders to see what bids others have made. Another example would be, as mentioned above, unreasonable restrictions placed on bid offers that may effectively eliminate all possible bidders save for one who may be a close associate of the mayor or official offering the bid.

> Another issue was false pre-qualifications for government (and private) contracts. For example, if you wanted 100 leather valises, you established certain pre-qualifications, such as that they must be made by certain kinds of machinery, which you knew that only one or a very few valise makers had. That effectively eliminated most of the competition.[66]

Mali does have an organization called the *direction de marchés publics.* This agency, the journalist explained, is supposed to see to it that government and private contracts are awarded with transparency and that all bidders have a fair chance of receiving a contract. Actually, it frequently does just the opposite. The agency often helps rig the bidding process by using false qualifications, such as the years of experience the bidders must have and the equipment they must use. This system gives a gloss of transparency when there is little or none. The most

64 Interview 112, Part 4.
65 Interview 112, Part 4; Whitehouse blog, April 19, 2013, p. 3.
66 Interview 112, Part 4.

recent *directeur de marchés publics* was imprisoned for engaging in these types of corruption, including false qualifications.[67]

I asked the student organizer whether the coup d'état of March 22, 2012, as I had heard, had unmasked the corruption of the Konaré and ATT administrations. He said Capt. Sanogo promised to shed light on corruption and hold people responsible for diversion of funds and other types of fraud. "The people supported Sanogo and his coup makers because they had no other way to fight against corruption. They hated corruption more than they loved democracy."[68] But, he added, Sanogo could not fulfill his promises of cleaning up corruption. He was forced to back off by outside pressure. Pressure, the student organizer claimed, came from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the World Bank, the UN, France, and from the Malian political parties. He also mentioned Decree (*Arrete*) No. 2802 of October 12, 2012, which, he claimed, was enacted because of Sanogo's exposure of corruption. Decree No. 2802, enacted by the *Ministre de Fonction Publique* Mamadou Namory Traoré, a member of the interim government, nullified the employment of many bureaucrats who had been appointed through nepotism and/or favoritism in violation of existing civil service requirements. These men were to be allowed to re-take their civil service exams. If they passed honestly, Traoré said, and not through favoritism or *magouille*, they would be restored to their positions. To date, I have not heard the outcome of Decree No. 2802. However, it does seem to support the talk I had heard about Sanogo's coup unmasking the corruption that had become so commonplace under Mali's democratic governance. Such talk, including some of the above observations and claims by my interview respondents, does appear to be a reflection of popular imagination and even indulgence in conspiracy theories more than an accurate representation of facts. However, part of the purpose of field interviews is to sound out popular sentiment, exaggerated or not. It is then up to the writer, and to the reader, to sort out such testimony and attempt to make sense of it to help understand complex situations that are often not adequately treated in published sources.

Corruption in the Military

The Malian army, like other major sectors of Malian society, was damaged and weakened by systematic corruption, including *magouille*, favoritism, and false documentation, according to a Malian US Embassy staffer.[69] "Young men and women routinely paid bribes and used falsified documents to get into the army in the first place. Once in, they were promoted through favoritism, not because of ability or qualifications. In this way the army was seriously debilitated."[70] Amadou

67 Interview 112, Part 4.
68 Interview 110, Part 3.
69 Interview 116 (US Embassy official, Malian).
70 Interview 112, Part 2.

Sanogo himself, it has been reported, flunked several exams during his training, but he was allowed to continue on the officer track nonetheless. This record of failed exams, if true, implies he was promoted and, possibly, chosen for training in the US over more qualified candidates.[71] In addition to recruitment and promotion on the basis of *magouille*, favoritism, and false documents, there has been the problem of depletion of equipment. By the end of the Traoré regime, Mali had one of the most powerful armies in the region. There were 32 helicopters in the army air corps at the time of the coup of 1991. Only two remained serviceable by 2012. The others were either stolen or sold, or cannibalized for parts. If the army had had a capable fleet of helicopters its disposal in early 2012, it might have been able to resupply garrisons at places like Aguelhoc or Menaka, which were overrun by MNLA rebels.[72] Corruption in the military resulted in hollow forces, leading to ineffectiveness against the MNLA and the Islamist militias.[73] Another problem was that the two presidents who served under the democratic regime, Konaré and ATT, did not purchase replacement armaments. This failure to replace equipment and weapons may have been partly due to diversion of funds, including military aid supplied by the US under the PSI and the TSCTP. It was also due to conscious decisions by the two presidents to make development the chief priority, not military materiel and bases. The Songhai woman who worked as a government bureaucrat felt the army was not so much weakened by corruption, but rather by the priorities of presidents Konaré and ATT.[74] Yet another problem was that ATT named many of his associates to the rank of general, many of whom were not fully qualified. Their pay was set very high, thus eating up a large portion of the military budget.[75]

Still another issue was likely collusion between military officers and politicians with the *magouille* and the illicit economy. Lebovich agrees the weakness of the Malian army was due to corruption, saying politicians benefitted from the illicit economy, including smuggling, while military personnel either "looked the other way," or were also complicit with smuggling.[76] An article in *Jeune Afrique* suggests Malian security forces were even in collusion with kidnappers who were part of AQIM cells since 2003, the year of the mass kidnapping. AQMI was never troubled by the Malian army despite the fact that it had been operating in Malian territory since that time. The article quotes Ag Mohammad Saleh, an Assembly deputy from Bourem near Gao. Even after AQIM terrorists killed two Malian army colonels, Saleh claims, there was no attempt by Malian security forces to arrest anyone and no attempt to take revenge on AQIM. Saleh feels that while

71 Moyar, Mark. "How Misguided U.S. Aid Contributed to Mali's Coup," *Bloomberg Opinion.* March 11, 2013, p. 2.

72 Interview 110, Part 2.

73 Interview 116.

74 Interview 108, Part 2.

75 Interview 110, Part 2. The respondent claimed some 70 officers were raised to the rank of general by ATT, though such numbers are likely exaggerated.

76 Lebovich, 2013, p. 2.

the Malian army was not infiltrated ideologically by AQIM, it was infiltrated economically. He mentions sales of arms by Malian soldiers to AQIM cells in 2009.[77] By one account, ATT had a tacit agreement with AQIM not to bother the group as long as it took no hostile action on Malian soil. An International Crisis Group report of 2012 says ATT's officials colluded with traffickers and kidnappers and shared their profits.[78] Researcher and analyst Wolfram Lacher says that up until the March 2012 coup, "State complicity with organized crime was the main factor enabling AQIM's growth and was a driver of conflict in the north of the country." He adds that it is widely believed negotiators in hostage ransom deals got a cut of the ransom, and that they shared this cut with their Malian political and military protectors.[79]

As noted above, positive proof of corruption, and especially collusion, on the part of either military or civilian officials, is hard to come by. Malian law enforcement agencies generally lack the sophistication, and probably the motivation, to conduct elaborate sting operations, especially in the remote north of the country. And reliable eye witnesses are likewise difficult to find, given that such witnesses may have been marginally complicit in activities themselves. Short of sting operations backed by audio or video evidence, or reliable eye witness accounts, the researcher must rely on hearsay accounts and on what people believe to be true. However, when persistent reports keep coming in on the part of journalists, local and international observers, foreign diplomats, and even US military and diplomatic personnel, as well as eye witnesses, reliable or otherwise, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there is some truth to the allegations. More will be said in Chapters 6 and 7 about the links between AQIM and its allied Islamist militias Ansar Dine and MUJAO with organized criminals and their activities, as well as alleged collusion, complicity, and receipt of payoffs on the part of Malian military and civilian officials. In any case, while there may be some doubt as to the veracity of allegations of corruption and/or collusion with traffickers on the part of either the military or government officials, there is no doubt these allegations are widely considered credible by large sectors of the Malian people. Likewise, there is no doubt such belief is partly responsible for Malians' disillusionment with the democratic regime and with democratic institutions altogether.

Tuareg/Arab Insurgencies in Northern Mali, 1990–2009

In addition to serious shortcomings in Malian democratic governance and entrenched political corruption, Mali suffered from a third significant problem

77 "Mali: Une complicité en haut lieu avec les trafiquants de drogue de Aqmi," *Jeune Afrique*. November 21, 2011, p. 2.

78 Lasserre, Isabelle and Thierry Oberlé. *Notre Guerre Secrète au Mali: Les Nouvelles Menaces contre la France*. Paris: Fayard, 2013, p. 101; ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 7.

79 Lacher, 2012, pp. 1, 9.

during its two decades of democratic rule, namely, renewed Tuareg and Arab insurgencies in its northern regions. Though the first of these new insurgencies began during the last year of the single-party dictatorship, the problem of nationalist, ethnic-based rebellions continued throughout much of the democratic period. We will try to take away three things from this section. First, the northern insurgencies of 1990–2009 show continuity with the *Alfellaga* of the early 1960s, in that they grew out of similar causes and they were motivated by similar goals. Second, a seemingly innovative and comprehensive solution to the first of these insurgencies appeared to illustrate the resiliency and effectiveness of democratic rule in Mali, but like other apparently promising features of the democracy, this solution too proved illusory. Third, the insurgencies of 1990–2009 set the stage for the 2012 Tuareg insurgency, which is what touched off the crisis that will dominate the last few chapters of this book. We will begin by examining the 1990–1995 insurgency, which could be considered as two or three separate insurgencies. Then we will discuss the 2006–2009 insurgency, which proved, among other things, that the peace settlement that had ended the earlier insurgency was illusory.

The 1990–1995 Insurgency

The second Tamasheq rebellion, known at the time in the Malian press as the Northern Conflict, was also called *al-Jebha* (Arabic: front, rebellion). Charles Grémont refers to it as "a time of perturbations."[80] It began in June of 1990 and ended officially in March of 1996. As such, it coincided with a similar rebellion of Tuaregs against the government of neighboring Niger, which lasted from 1991–1995.[81] According to Baz Lecocq, it consisted of four main phases. The first phase, from June 1990 to January 1991, was a nationalist rebellion that sought independence for the north. It featured important Tuareg victories, especially at Toximine, and resulted in a hasty peace called the Tamanrasset Agreement. It took place entirely during the last year of the Traoré dictatorship, and it, like the 1962–63 rebellion, it was largely restricted to the Kidal area. The second phase lasted from January 1991 to early 1994. It featured factionalism among the rebelling parties and protracted negotiations with the Malian government, including the transition government and the first Konaré administration. The third phase, which lasted from April 1994 to October 1994, saw the rise of ethnic militias, including the Songhai-led Ganda Koy. By this time the "Uprising" had become more of an ethnic-based conflict than a war for national liberation. The fourth and last phase, from October 1994 to March 1996, represented a gradual return to peace,

80 Grémont, Charles, Andre Marty, et al. *Les lien sociaux au Nord-Mali: Entre fleuve et dunes*. Paris: Editions Karthala, 2004, p. 33.

81 Brachet, Julien. "Movements of People and Goods: Local Impacts and Dynamics of Migration to and through the Central Sahara" in James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 245.

culminating in the symbolic "Flame of Peace" ceremony in Timbuktu.[82] The *al-Jebha* rebellion was originally organized from Libya and Algeria as a Tuareg and Arab liberation movement.[83] It grew out of the *ishumar* political culture of Tamasheq exiles, and brought together several simmering Tuareg rebel projects. By the 1990s, Libya's Muammar Qadaffi had begun to refocus his economic and diplomatic efforts on Sub-Saharan Africa, after the failure of his Pan-Arab initiatives in which the Malian exiles had played such an important part.[84] Expecting little further help from Libya, the exiles decided to apply the political and military skills they had learned in exile to a war of liberation. The goal of the rebellion, according to historian Bruce Hall, was "the creation of independent or autonomous territories [in northern Mali] for Tuareg and Arab people where they would constitute the racial and ethnic majority."[85] The Kel Tamasheq, as was the case during the *Alfellaga*, did not want to be part of a black African nation. They were also motivated by lingering resentment among the Kidal Tuareg against the Malian government because of the brutal treatment of civilians by the Malian army in the *Alfellaga*.[86] This Tamasheq nationalism and anti-government resentment was nurtured in the 1970s and 80s during the exile period.[87]

The revolt began in June of 1990 with raids against Malian government and military targets. These raids provoked repression by the military that drove many more young Tuareg into rebellion. The first attack took place at Menaka and was led by Iyad ag Ghali, leader of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MPLA).[88] The MPLA, which was secular-nationalist in nature, was part of an umbrella group called MUFA that at one time included the more religiously based Armed Islamic Front of Azawad (FIAA), a faction of Arabs and Moors who were closely tied to Algeria and Mauritania, as well as other groups.[89] Rebel battalions and arms caches had been established at Kidal, Gao, and Menaka in preparation for the rebellion. The Menaka raid was precipitated by the capture of the Kidal and Gao battalion leaders by Malian army units. The raid included attacks on military posts and resulted in the seizure of Malian military vehicles by the rebels.[90] Although most analysts say the rebellion started as a politically

82 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 295–6.

83 Hall, 2011, p. 321.

84 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 9.

85 Hall, 2011, p. 3

86 Dillon, 2007, p. 83.

87 Lode, Kåre. (2002a) "Mali's peace process: Context, analysis and evaluation" *Accord: Owning the Process, Public Participation in Peacemaking.* 2002, p. 3.

88 Interview 111 (Group Interview) Part 1; "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End: Peacemaking by Consensus in Mali," Reprinted from *People Building Peace: 35 Inspiring Stories from Around the World,* published by the European Centre for Conflict Prevention, p. 2.

89 Morgan, Andrew. (2012a) "The Causes of the Uprising in Northern Mali," *Think Africa Press.* February 6, 2012, pp. 2–4.

90 Lecocq, 2010, p. 299.

motivated separatist movement rather than an ethnic rivalry turned violent, there appear to have been aspects of ethnic violence from the beginning. I was in Mali in late 1990, and stories were circulating in Bamako to the effect that Tuareg fighters were perpetrating ethnic-based attacks on individual civilians. A friend of mine told me Tuaregs were accosting and killing ethnic Songhai and Fulbe civilians by slitting their throats on the streets of river towns, including Gao and Timbuktu. When I pressed him for some examples of how these attacks were carried out, he told me, "*Si tu parles leur langue, ils te laisse*" ("If you speak their language they leave you alone"). I gathered this was how the perpetrators distinguished Songhai and Fulbe from the Tamasheq-speaking *bellah*.[91]

Mali's two original northern regions, Timbuktu and Gao, had been administered by the military almost continually since independence in 1960. When northern rebels began attacking army posts, Malian officials declared a state of emergency on July 20, 1990.[92] The rebels consisted of Tuareg fighters from many parts of Mali, not just the Adrar des Ifoghas near Kidal. It also included Malian Arabs. Malian Arabs, or Bidan, as discussed in Chapter 1, included important tribal confederacies like the Kel Antassar, the Kel es-Souk, and the Kunta.[93] As the first months of the uprising wore on, the rebels won victories. Many of the rebels, especially those of the *Tanekra* who had fought in Qadaffi's wars, were experienced fighters. They used 4 x 4 technicals, which were superior to the Malian army's armored personnel carriers in mobility. The *ishumar* fighters had fortified the Adrar, creating a series of some 15 mountain bases that had caches of arms, wells, and perimeter defenses. One of these bases was in the Tirgharghar Mountains. This is the same area where AQIM would later establish its Malian bases. Malian forces were unprepared and proved no match for the rebels. In early September the rebels won victories at In Taykaren and Toximine, near Tirgharghar. The fighting at Toximine was the worst defeat of Malian arms during the fighting, and led to negotiations.[94] Unable to defeat the well-armed rebels, the Malian army took to harassing and even attacking civilians. Frustrated non-Tamasheq civilians attacked Tamasheq and Bidan homes and shops in Malian cities, including Timbuktu and Gao, effectively spreading the conflict to the Niger bend area. The attacks and reprisals caused the flight of many Kel Tamasheq and Bidan civilians to southern Algeria in 1990 and 1991.[95] It is important to keep in mind that at this point Mali was still ruled by Moussa Traoré's UDPM. Because the Traoré regime focused on crushing the northern revolt, it

91 Personal communication, Ibrahim Kanté, November 1990.

92 "Tuareg Chronology," Center for International Development and Conflict Management. Minorities at Risk Project. n.d, p. 1.

93 Interview 111, Part 1. Some of these Bidan claimed descent from the Banu Hassan of Mauritania, some from Arab pastoralists of Tunisia, and some from the Arma, descendants of the Moroccan force that crossed the desert to attack the Songhai Empire in 1592.

94 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 300, 303, 304–5.

95 Lecocq, 2010, p. 327.

let the nascent pro-democracy political opposition gain strength and ultimately get out of control at Bamako and other southern cities. By late 1990, the pro-democracy movement had become so unruly the regime was forced to negotiate with the rebels in order to focus on the political opposition in the south.[96] These negotiations resulted in the Tamanrasset Accords of January 1991. The second Tuareg rebellion, or *al-Jebha*, therefore, bore many similarities to the first Tuareg rebellion, the *Alfellaga*. It was motivated by the same causes, including rejection on the part of the fair-skinned northern Malian Tamasheq and Bidan of the idea of being part of a black African nation like Mali. It also shared the same goals: independence from Mali, or at least some form of autonomy and self-rule within a weakened Malian state.

The Tamanrasset Accords

By late 1990, President Traoré's forces had contained but not ended the Northern Conflict. Some rebels and many civilians had fled to Algeria. Algeria served as a hinterland for the rebels, where they were able to seek refuge from Malian army attacks and to re-supply their forces. Some Algerians had played a similar role during the *Alfellaga*, at least during the earlier phases of it.[97] Algeria and Mali faced similar circumstances in late 1990. Both were former French colonies, and both were around 30 years into independence. Both were ruled by autocratic, single-party, military-dominated regimes. They shared a long, isolated border region that was not fully under the control of either government. And both were confronted with escalating demands for political openings by diverse and restive populations. There were also significant differences. Mali lacked Algeria's lucrative hydrocarbon sector, while Algeria's opposition contained a robust Islamist component that Mali's lacked.[98] As mentioned in Chapter 2, Algeria's government was concerned with the rising popularity of the FIS. Mali's ruling elite, meanwhile, was concerned with rising popular demands for political pluralism, which were then manifesting themselves in the form of sometimes violent demonstrations on the streets of Bamako. As such, both governments were motivated to unburden themselves of a peripheral problem. The Algerian government urged Mali's combatant sides to reach a settlement and offered to host a negotiation at the southern Algerian city of Tamanrasset. In particular, Algeria's leadership pushed the Malian Tuareg commanders to abandon their goal of independence. Iyad ag Ghali, a French-educated product of *ishumar* culture and a member of the noble Ifoghas clan, negotiated for Tuareg and Arab rebel factions, including the Bidan FIAA and the Tuareg MPA (formerly MPLA).[99] The Tamanrasset Accords, signed on January 6, 1991, represented a hastily reached agreement that included, among other

96 Lode, 2002a, p. 4; Lecocq, 2010, p. 307.
97 Interview 111, Part 1; Lecocq, 2010, p. 309.
98 Dillon, 2007, p. 25.
99 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 3; Lecocq, 2010, p. 311.

elements, a cease fire and a set of promises to develop the north and to decentralize government in the two northern regions. Other elements contained in the Accords included lifting the state of emergency and the withdrawal of troops, and amnesty for Tuareg political prisoners.[100] A further concession to the Tuaregs included a promise to create a third northern region, Kidal, including the Adrar des Ifoghas, to be carved out of the Region of Gao.[101] Traoré made many other concessions to the Tuareg, including integration of former insurgents into the government and civil society and a significant degree of autonomy, but not independence for the northern regions. The pro-democratic opposition later saw these concessions as a serious compromise of national integrity.[102]

The Tamanrasset Accords changed the nature of the rebellion but did not end it. The Accords failed for several reasons. First, Mali's transitional government, the Transitional Council for Public Safety (CTSP), headed by ATT, did not recognize the Accords. The rebellion helped precipitate the pro-democracy coup of March 1991, but the Tuaregs did not participate directly in the coup and so they were little represented in the transitional government.[103] Mali's brief national conference of July 1991 did not accept the Tamanrasset agreement, and the CTSP did not regard it as legitimate because it was negotiated by the then-defunct Traoré regime.[104] Second, the CTSP could not fully control the Malian army in the north. Troops in the north resented the Tamanrasset Accords and continued their reprisal raids against Tuareg camps. These reprisal raids helped spread the rebellion beyond Kidal area to the Niger bend.[105] Third, the Tuareg and Bidan factions continued to change and split into splinter movements, not all of which accepted the Accords.[106] Fourth, and most importantly, the Accords failed because the terms of the agreement were not honored by the CTSP. The promises of economic development and administrative decentralization were not implemented.[107] What did happen was that the nature of the rebellion changed in at least two important ways. First, as mentioned above, it expanded into new areas. During 1990 the rebel attacks had been largely confined to the Adrar des Ifoghas. After the Tamanrasset Accords, the attacks spread to the Azawad and to towns and cities along the Niger River, including Timbuktu and Gao.[108] The Tuareg also became less of a national liberation movement and more of a violent, ethnic-based rivalry, as will be discussed in the next section.

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100 Hall, 2011, p. 11; "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End," p. 2.

101 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 3; Lecocq, 2010, p. 315. The Région of Kidal became Mali's eighth region during the Konaré administration (Interview 111, Part 1).

102 Lode, 2002a, p. 4.

103 Diakité, M. Personal communication, February 20, 2013, p. 1.

104 Lode, 2002a, p. 4; Lecocq, 2010, p. 319.

105 Lode, 2002a, p. 5; Dillon, 2007, p. 86.

106 Morgan, 2012, p. 4; "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End," p. 2.

107 Scheele, Judith, *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 150; ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 3.

108 Hall, 2011, p. 321; Lecocq, 2010, p. 313.

The National Pact of 1992

Widespread dissatisfaction with the Tamanrasset Accords on the part of the *ishumar* leadership ushered in the second phase of the rebellion. The fragility of the agreement led to calls for new negotiations with Mali's transitional government, the CTSP. This round of negotiations began in the Algerian city of El-Golea in the northern Sahara and then shifted to the Malian Région of Segu. During these negotiations the United Movements and Fronts of the Azawad (MFUA) formed as a new group for the purposes of the negotiations. Pulled together at the urging of the Algerian mediators, MUFA agreed, significantly, not to seek independence.[109] The negotiations resumed in Algiers in early 1992, as Malian civil society leaders designated by the CTSP haggled with the MFUA. The discussions ended in an Algerian brokered agreement called the National Pact on April 11, 1992.[110] The CTSP and MFUA negotiators concluded four main items of agreement, including peace and security in the north, national reconciliation, special development initiatives in the north, and special status for the north within the Malian state.[111] Also included were promises to integrate rebels into the army or civil service, an exchange of prisoners, the return of the refugees, mostly Tuareg and Bidan, 10 years of tax emptions for the north, and renewed respect for Tuareg language and culture. A special commission for the north was to report to the Malian president on progress towards implementation of the items of agreement.[112] The National Pact did result in a measure of self-determination for the new Kidal Région, and some rebels and their leaders were integrated into the Malian army.

Mali's first democratically elected president Alpha Konaré took office on June 8, 2002, nearly three months after the signing of the National Pact. But troops in the north were again resentful. They were uncomfortable with civilian rule, not known in Mali for decades, and they felt the CTSP had given away too much to the Tuaregs. Despite President Konaré's orders to the contrary, army raids against Tuareg camps continued. As a result, civilian refugees continued to flee into exile. Between 1990 and 1994, a total of some 150,000 refugees, Kel Tamasheq and Bidan, fled Mali, most to Algeria.[113] The results of the National Pact were, therefore, similar to the results of the Tamanrasset Accords. Some, if not most, of the promises were never implemented, notably autonomy for the north and respect for Tuareg language and culture. Besides failure on the part of the Malian government—this time the elected democratic government—to implement the agreement, many Malians saw the National Pact as a capitulation to the rebels.

109 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 310–11, 320; Lode, 2002a, p. 5; Dillon, 2007, p. 97.

110 Dillon, 2007, p. 94; Grémont et al., 2004, p. 13.

111 Morgan, 2012, p. 2; Lode, 2002a, p. 5.

112 Hall, 2011, p. 321; "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End," p. 2; Lecocq, 2010, pp. 321, 322–3.

113 Sperl, Stefan. "International refugee aid and social change in northern Mali," *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 21 (1–2). 2002, p. 148; Lode, 2002a, p. 6.

Tuareg leaders were made governors and military commanders in the north, and their political parties were given ministries in the national government, despite representing less than 1 percent of the population of the country. Many Malians felt these concessions were much more than the rebels deserved.[114] As a result, the rebellion still did not end, but merely moved into its third phase, which featured the rise of Malian ethnic-based militias, including the Songhai-led Ganda Koy and a resurgence of ethnic violence, much of it deadly.

The Ganda Koy and Ethnic Strife in Mali

The second Tuareg rebellion, along with the democratization movement, sparked an upsurge in Malian nationalism in the early 1990s. This renewed national spirit expressed itself in the form of resistance to any compromise with the Kel Tamasheq rebels.[115] It also led to the formation of ethnic militias among the Songhai and Fulbe along the Niger bend. The best known of these was the Songhai-led Ganda Koy. Its official name was the Patriotic Malian Movement Ganda Koy (MPMGK). "Ganda Koy" in the Songhai language means "Masters of the Land."[116] These ethnic militias, which included Songhai and Fulbe deserters from the Malian army, helped the army put down the northern rebellion. The date of the formal foundation of the Ganda Koy is disputed; however, the beginning of the militia movement seems to have been in 1991 after the failure of the Tamanrasset Accords. The militias claimed to be defending the rights of the settled riverine populations against the depredations of nomads.[117] They were responsible for part of the violence that continued throughout 1991 and 1992 between the Tuareg and Bidan on one hand and the Songhai and Fulbe on the other. During much of this time the writ of the Malian government was not effective in the region between Mopti and Gao.[118] Journalist Andrew Morgan says the Ganda Koy was founded in 1992 as a Songhai militia funded and backed by the Malian army. The purpose of the movement seems to have been, he says, to terrorize Tuareg and Bidan civilians. Numerous massacres were perpetrated, including the killing of some 60 Tuareg marabouts at a nomad camp near Gao in October of 1994. He adds that the "darkest ethnic conflict in modern Malian history began when the Ganda Koy was formed."[119] Other sources agree the creation of the Ganda Koy

114 Morgan, 2012, p. 2; Interview 111, Part 1.

115 Lecocq, 2010, p. 25.

116 Grémont, Charles. "Villages and Crossroads: Changing Territorialities among the Tuareg of Northern Mali" in James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 141; Morgan, 2012, p. 4; Interview 111, Part 1.

117 Grémont, 2012, p. 141.

118 Scheele, 2012a, p. 150; Interview 111, Part 1.

119 Morgan, 2012, p. 4.

stemmed from the failure of the Tamanrasset Accords of January 1991.[120] Most sources claim, however, that the Ganda Koy was not founded until May of 1994, by which time Mali was on the verge of civil war, and that the organization was created by deserted army officials and sedentarist Songhai to protect themselves from the Tuareg rebels. Among the founders of the Ganda Koy were Ali Bady Maïga, a Gao businessman, and Capt. Abdoulaye Hamadahmane Maïga, a Malian army deserter, both of whom were members of the Songhai sedentary community. Capt. Maïga claimed his motivation for forming the militia was his frustration with the failure of the army to restore security to the north.[121]

The emergence of the Ganda Koy marks the transition of the war from a Tuareg/Bidan national rebellion against the central government to an intercommunal conflict between the "people of the river" and the "people of the dunes," in which ethnicity dominated.[122] Lecocq says a massacre at a Gao hospital on May 13, 1994, perpetrated by armed Kel Tamasheq, "paved the way" for the formation of the Ganda Koy, and that its goal was "to defend the 'sedentary black' population against the 'white nomad' threat against national unity."[123] He adds that the Ganda Koy used 4 x 4 technicals and armed powerboats to protect the land and the waterways along the Niger bend. They enjoyed the public support not only of the Songhai and other sedentary peoples along the river, including Fulbe, but also of Malians as far south as Bamako. Many *bellah* also supported and participated in the Ganda Koy. Social anthropologist Judith Scheele says the Ganda Koy movement publically stressed the distinction between the "blacks" and the "whites," partly to attract *bellah* and *haratin* semi-servile peoples, many of whom joined the movement, though some remained neutral.[124] This racially based narrative was by and large supported by southern Malians. It excluded the Kel Tamasheq from the Malian nation, but because it was expressed within a racial paradigm it did not exclude the *bellah*, who, despite speaking Tamasheq, were also black, like the Songhai.[125] Lecocq says that the Ganda Koy reflected the values of sedentary life and self-reliance, adding that they wanted to cleanse the river banks of Tuareg nomads and "send them back to Azawad."[126] This racially based narrative was also a feature of the *Alfellaga*, in that it excluded the Kel Tamasheq and the Bidan from Malian nationhood on the basis of their fair skin. It was this racially charged aspect of the

120 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 3; Grémont, 2012, p. 141

121 Humphreys, Marcartan and Habaye ag Mohamed. "Senegal and Mali," in Pal Collier and Nicholas Sambaing (eds) *Understanding Civil War. Volume 1: Africa.* Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2005, p. 259; Grémont, 2012, p. 141.

122 Grémont et al., 2004, p. 34, "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End," p. 3; Lecocq, 2010, p. 329.

123 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 337–8.

124 Scheele, 2012a, p. 150.

125 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 338, 348, 370.

126 Lecocq, Baz. "The Bellah Question: Slave Emancipation, Race, and Social Categories in Late-Twentieth Century Northern Mali." *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 39 (1), 2005, pp. 59–60.

second Tuaregrebellion that moved it beyond a simple war of national liberation for the north to a conflict based on communal strife featuring attacks by militias and armed regulars of both sides against civilian populations. The peak of the racial violence came in the crisis year 1994. Not only did civil war in the north seem to be threatening Mali's new democracy, but two failed governments, the currency devaluation, and the school crisis, all in 1994, also seemed to be tearing Mali apart.[127] But 1994 also represented a turn-around year as innovative solutions helped not only stem the Northern Conflict, but to diffuse the multiple crises unfolding at Bamako and to validate some of the international praise Mali's democracy had generated in its first few years.

The Crisis Year, 1994, and After

Between 1992 and 1994, tensions in the north had resumed. The rebel umbrella group MFUA had lost influence over its disparate component groups. Malian troops in the north, resentful over the terms of both the Tamanrasset Accords and the National Pact, continued their attacks on Tuareg camps, often attacking civilians, and President Konaré was reluctant to crack down on them, fearing a coup against his struggling government. Meanwhile, the Songhai and other sedentary peoples along the Niger River were forming their own militias and pressing attacks, often against civilians. Many towns and cities in the north had been virtually cleansed of their ethnic Tuareg and Bidan populations.[128] Algeria had wanted Malian Tamasheq and Bidan refugees to return to Mali after the signing of the National Pact in 1992. The government in Algiers was becoming increasingly concerned about the rise of Islamist terrorist groups in the north of the country, especially the GIA. But failure on the part of the Malian government to carry out the terms of the Tamanrasset Accords and the National Pact had resulted in a resumption of hostilities in the north of Mali by May of 1994.[129] All of these problems in the north formed part of what some observers were calling the "Crisis of 1994," which included the 50 percent currency devaluation in January that led to high inflation, student strikes as part of the school crisis, and the resignation of two of Konaré's prime ministers and their governments.[130]

By June of 1994, with ethnic violence in the north escalating and new waves of refugees from the Adagh pouring into southern Algeria, Konaré and his new prime minister, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK), Mali's current president, had come to the realization that a military solution to rebellion was not possible.[131] Facing multiple crises across the country, Konaré and IBK turned to the public to find a path out, seeking public consensus for transformations. Beginning in August 1994,

127 Lode, 2002b, p. 1
128 Lode, 2002a, p. 6; Hall, 2011, pp. 321–2.
129 Lecocq, 2010, pp. 325, 348.
130 Lode, 2002b, p. 1.
131 "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End," p. 2; Lecocq, 2010, p. 328.

a series of public meetings called *concertations*, 17 in all, were held throughout the country. The *concertations* were open to everyone, including traditional leaders (chiefs), students, women, labor union members, professionals, and government representatives. Based on the National Conference model on the local level as well as on the African tradition of consensus building, the meetings lasted from three days to a week.[132] Guided by a facilitator, often from the outside, the *concertations* were not for making decisions, but for airing grievances, brainstorming on the nation's multiple crises, and seeking public consensus on issues of local and national concern. The success of the regional meetings, despite rising violence between the Ganda Koy and the Tuareg movements, led to a national *concertation* in Bamako, attended by regional participants, government representatives, parliamentarians, and civil society leaders. The national *concertation* led to a sort of national consensus that gave Konaré the legitimacy he needed to begin to diffuse the pressing national problems besetting the country.[133] In November of 1994, a series of civil-society based initiatives began in the north, seeking to resolve the persistent Northern Conflict. Civil society leaders from across the country met with traditional and movement leaders from the north in inter-community meetings (*rencontres entrecommunautaires*). Konaré, supporting the initiative, removed or confined unruly troops to barracks and told regional authorities not to interfere. The inter-community meetings were large gatherings that included northern traditional leaders, government representatives, former refugees, northern *ulema*, and members of the conflict groups. They were supported by UN agencies, including the Higher Committee on Refugees (UNHCR) and the Development Program (UNDP). While the inter-community meetings worked on a ceasefire, the Konaré government began making plans to integrate northern combatants into the army and civil service, a promise made in the earlier agreements, and to decommission weapons.[134] The consensus model, long a Malian tradition but stifled under the dictatorship, had been revitalized during the regional *concertations*, and it appeared to prove successful in peace negotiations in the north.[135]

The fighting in the north peaked in late 1994, as did the refugee crisis. By December 1994, some 150,000 refugees, Tamasheq and Bidan, had fled to Mauritania, Algeria, and Burkina.[136] Despite the renewal of violence in 1994, some understandings did emerge among the combatant parties. First, it became apparent Mali's foreign neighbors, especially Algeria, were no longer interested in helping the Tuareg rebels. Second, all sides wanted peace if their demands could be met. Third, the basic outlines of a future settlement began to emerge. And fourth, civil society leaders were taking the lead in the negotiations. The success of the *concertations* across the country and of the inter-community meetings in the north

132 "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End," p. 3
133 Lode, 2002b, pp. 1–3.
134 Sperl, 2002, p. 152; Boukhari, 2000, p. 2; Lode, 2002a, pp. 7–8.
135 Lode, 2001b, p. 3.
136 Sperl, 2002, p. 148; Tuareg Chronicle 9.

was ascribed to the consensus model and the return of the inter-ethnic economic model, both of which were regarded as traditional elements of Malian culture. The inter-ethnic economic model is what Grémont et al. call the complementarity of economics, which they associate with the Niger bend area (see Chapter 1).[137] Few serious attacks occurred after January 1995; by December 1995 the refugees were returning and thousands of Tuareg fighters had accepted the process of reintegration and were exchanging their weapons for reinsertion into civilian life. [138] President Konaré's seeming success in stemming the multiple national crises and ending the Northern Conflict was legitimizing Mali's democratic transition in the eyes of the world. Mali won a "solid international reputation as a champion of the culture of peace," and the country was held up as an example for the continent.[139] As mentioned above, Timbuktu was awarded the UNESCO "Cities for Peace" prize in 1998–99. Konaré's decentralization of government, which began in the north and had been originally called for in the National Pact, further cemented the peace process.[140] It was described as the "political answer to rebellion" by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) consultant Ibrahim ag Youssuf and praised as "ambitious" and "visionary" and a potential model for Africa by the UN Institute for Disarmament Research.[141]There were six "essential aspects" of the Malian peace process:

1. Building civilian-military relations
2. Discreet mediation by national and international figures
3. Decentralization of governance
4. Promotion of reconciliation through civil society
5. Disarmament and demobilization
6. Investment in the re-integration of former rebel combatants.[142]

The peace process culminated in the "Flame of Peace" ceremony on March 27, 1996, in Timbuktu, in which more than 3,000 small arms were burned. President Konaré, ECOWAS Chairman Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, leaders of MFUA and the Ganda Koy, as well as a large delegation of NGO representatives and other international observers watched the bonfire.[143] Lecocq points out, however, that the best and most experienced fighters did not attend the ceremony, and the most effective arms were not surrendered.[144] These details, which would bode ill for the

137 Grémont et al., 2004, p. 84.

138 Lode, 2002b, p. 3; Lode, 2002a, p. 6; Tuareg Chronicle 9; Malian Civil War 2000, p. 1; Security First ND, p. 1.

139 Lode, 2002b, p. 3; Boukhari, 2000, p. 1.

140 Dillon, 2007, p. 95.

141 Boukhari, 2000, p. 3; "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End," p. 4.

142 "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End," p. 3.

143 Lode, 2002a, p. 8; "How the Touareg Rebellion Came to an End," p. 5.

144 Lecocq, 2010, p. 363.

future of the Malian north, were not discussed at any length in the major sources at the time. The highly symbolic ceremony did appear to end the conflict, at least for a while. As we shall see below, a third Tuareg rebellion flared up in the north a scant 10 years after the vaunted "Flame of Peace," calling into question the resiliency and effectiveness of democratic rule in Mali.

The 2006—2009 Insurgency

The Tuareg rebellion flared up again on May 23, 2006, once more under the leadership of Iyad ag Ghali. Rebels attacked and gained control of two Malian military encampments at Kidal and Menaka.[145] They captured the army's vehicles, weapons, and supplies at these bases and fled with their booty to the Algerian border area in the Adagh. This new rebellion was started by two disgruntled Tuareg army officers, Hassan ag Fagaga and Ibrahim Bahanga. These officers had been based in the Kidal Région.[146] The group behind the 2006 rebellion was called the Democratic Alliance of May 23 for Change (ADC). They were reportedly armed by Algeria.[147] According to Lecocq, the Malian army, assisted by US troops, retook Kidal from the rebels on May 25, 2006. However, once again, the international community put pressure on the Malian government to settle. A hasty peace was brokered by Algeria called the Algiers Accords.[148] The new peace agreement was signed by the ADC and by Malian president ATT on July 4. The new agreement dealt only with the Kidal Région and called for a restatement of the terms of the National Pact of 1992. By the terms of the Algiers Accords, Mali was required to abandon its military positions in the north, as Malian regular troops were replaced by *méharistes*. However, most of these camel troopers were Tuareg, and their leaders were all Tuareg.[149] Effectively, the 2006 agreement gave the security of the north over to the rebels after superficially integrating them into the Malian army.[150] Once again, many southern Malians felt the government was giving away too much to the rebellious Tuareg, and they called the agreement the Accord of Shame (*Accord de la honte*).[151] The fighting in the Kidal Région did not stop with the Algiers Accords. Ibrahim Bahanga led a one and a half-year campaign of harassment and terror against the Malian army. Many soldiers—some reports say as many as 80—were kidnapped for ransom amid ongoing raids and

145 Prashad, Vijay. "Sahelian Blowback: What's Happening in Mali?" *Counterpunch.* October 29, 2009. p.1.

146 Interview 111, Part 1; ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 3.

147 Morgan, 2012, p. 2.

148 Lecocq, 2010, p. 395; Prashad, 2009.

149 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, pp. 3–4; Lecocq, 2010, pp. 396–7.

150 Diakité, M. Personal communication, February 20, 2013, p. 2.

151 Interview 111, Part 1.

ambushes. In September of 2007, Bahanga broke from the ADC and formed a new splinter group called the Northern Malian Tuareg Alliance for Change (ATNMC).[152]

It is at this point that the 2006–2009 northern rebellion began to look different from the 1990–1995 northern rebellion. The 1990s rebellion wavered between a nationalist Tuareg independence movement based on the Adagh and Azawad areas and violent ethnic-based clashes centered on the Niger bend region. The 2006 rebellion took on several aspects that did not appear to be part of the rebellion of the 1990s. For one thing, it is around 2006 when organized crime began to take hold in northern Mali as different criminal networks strove to control smuggling routes in order to impose transit fees. Thus, the rival criminal networks accounted for a large part of the fighting during the rebellion.[153] Another feature is that the smuggling of cocaine, as mentioned in Chapter 2, began to comprise a significant part of the smuggling trade across northern Mali around 2007. The later phases of the rebellion in 2007–2008 consisted largely of rivalries among cocaine smuggling networks.[154] The lucrative cocaine trade, as opposed to contraband traffic in cigarettes and commodities, is what attracted outside organized crime networks, called "mafias" in Algeria, to northern Mali in the first place. Since, as Scheele points out, the cocaine trade was considered *al-frūd al-harām* (forbidden fraud), as opposed to the smuggling of commodities, which was considered *al-frūd al-halal* (permitted fraud), the profits made from drugs are barren (*mahil*) and had to be "laundered," that is put into "moral" investments, such as real estate, livestock, or irrigation works, in order to be considered respectable or blessed (*mubarak*) by Algerian and northern Malian trading families.[155] At this time, with the cocaine traffic flourishing, villas began popping up in Gao's *Cocainebougou* (Cocaine town), as well as in Bamako.[156] Another new ingredient, Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), was also in the mix. Morgan says the Malian army had few engagements with AQIM since a battle in the desert north of Timbuktu in 2006, despite the fact that the terrorist organization had been operating on Malian territory, namely in the Adagh, the center of the Tuareg rebellions, since 2003 when it was still called the GSPC (see Chapter 2).

Another element distinguishing the 2006 rebellion from the *al-Jebha* of the 1990s was the cultivation by Malian officials and military commanders of Arab and some Tuareg militias to help in the fight against the rebel Tuareg forces. Lacher says then-president Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) used Arab militias, organized to protect the smuggling routes, to fight the Tuareg rebels in 2007 and 2008. Both Lacher and Morgan are implying that Malian officials, some of them

152 Morgan, 2012, p. 2.

153 Le Vine, Victor. "Mali: Accommodation or Coexistence?" in William F.S. Miles (ed.) *Political Islam in West Africa: State-Society Relations Transformed.* London: Lynne Rienner, 2007, p. 93.

154 Lacher, 2012, p. 8.

155 Scheele, 2012b, p. 230.

156 Scheele, 2012a, p. 120.

allegedly close to ATT, may have been in collusion with the smugglers, including the cocaine smugglers, or with their protectors, at least to the degree of accepting a cut of the fees extorted.[157] The International Crisis Group, which also suggests collusion between high-level Malian officials and the smuggling trade, notes ATT's preferred method of asserting a degree of control over the restive north was creating and arming rival ethnic-based militias, especially Arab, to check the power of the Tuareg rebel groups by keeping each other off balance.[158] Lacher concurs, as does Morgan, that ATT created militias composed of Berabiche Arabs and Imghad Tuareg, among other groups, as a counter to the Ifoghas and Idnan Tuareg rebels. Morgan says the Malian army from 2009 and earlier, as per ATT's policy, had encouraged the formation of northern tribal militias to help them fight the Tuareg insurgents. One such militia was formed by El-Hajj Gemou, an Imghad Tuareg, while another was formed by the Arab leader Abderahmane Ould Meydou.[159]

By 2008, only Ibrahim Bahanga's ATNMC group was actively fighting the Malian army directly as part of the Tuareg rebellion. On May 6, 2008, Bahanga's men attacked an army base at Diabaly in the Région of Segu. This attack recalled the Tuareg's hyper mobile tactics used in the 1990s.[160] The decision to target the southern town of Diabaly, however, uncannily presages the attack by MUJAO militiamen on that same town in January of 2013. It was the 2013 attack on Diabaly that led directly to the French military intervention that same month. The attack by MUJAO on Diabaly, many observers believe, was part of a southern thrust by the Islamist militias whose ultimate target appeared to be Bamako itself. It was to prevent just such an attack that the French decided to jump into the fray. It is not known if Bahanga's 2008 attack on Diabaly was likewise intended as part of an attempt to bring the Tuareg rebellion to the capital. In any case, the attack on Diabaly was the only occasion when northern Tuareg rebels penetrated into the populous southern part of Mali. In January of 2009, the Malian army finally defeated Bahanga's ATNMC with the help of Gamou's and Ould Maydou's allied militias.[161] Bahanga's forces were driven out of the Tirgharghar Mountains by the army and its allies and defeated at Toximine, the site of his victory over the army in 1990 (see above). The defeated Bahanga fled to Libya, into the arms of Qadaffi, in February, and his ATNMC training camps in the Adagh were shut down.[162] Morgan critiques Qadaffi's relationship with the Malian Tuaregs in this period, calling it "one of mutual opportunism, rather than shared ideals or common destiny." The Libyan leader gave small contributions to the Tuareg rebel cause during the last years of his dictatorship, while at the same time he was making significant investments in water resources and tourist

157 Lacher, 2012, p. 8; Morgan, 2012, p. 9.
158 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 4.
159 Lacher, 2012, p. 8; Morgan, 2012, p. 5.
160 Lecocq, 2010, p. 399.
161 Prashad, 2009.
162 Lecocq, 2010, p. 401; Morgan, 2012, p. 5.

infrastructure in Mali as a whole, including a large hotel in Bamako. Bahanga too became critical of his patron, saying that the fall of Qadaffi would be good for the Tuareg cause, and that Qadaffi had merely used the Tuareg for his own ends. Regardless of Qadaffi's intentions, it was not failure on the part of either Algeria or Libya to provide consistent support that led to the defeat of the Tuareg rebels by Malian security forces in 2009. The Tuareg were ultimately defeated by their own chronic lack of unity. The French took advantage of Tuareg disunity in the colonial period, and so did the Malian government during the tenure of the democracy. [163] But the most serious challenge to Mali's democracy will come, as we shall see in Chapter 7, not from the Tuareg, but from the Algerian terrorist organization AQIM and its Islamist allies.

Conclusion

The period from 1990 to 2012 was a time of intense change for Mali, both on the ground, and in the country's international image. Mali in 1990 was a poor, though relatively stable West African country with a more or less typical secular-nationalist political ideology and a quasi-socialist economic system featuring state enterprises that controlled major sectors and industries against a background of widespread free-market-based petty entrepreneurship and rural subsistence agriculture. Socially, it had a relatively traditional culture, despite a modernizing urban sector, and a reputation for moderation and tolerance in religion and ethnic relations. By 1992, much of that had changed. Mali had been caught up in international forces that were swirling uncontrollably around it, including the collapse of the Soviet Union as a superpower and an economic and political model for formerly colonized nations of the Third World, as well as the related "Third Wave" of democratization then sweeping across Africa. Mali's dictatorship had been overthrown by popular demands for political openings and a multi-party parliamentary government framework. A seemingly stable democratic system had been established with relatively little bloodshed, and successful elections had been conducted, though marred by relatively low voter turnout. Mali's reputation for ethnic tolerance had been severely challenged by the second Tuareg/Arab insurgency since independence, but its reputation for moderation and tolerance in religious relations and affairs remained intact for the time being, as did its democratically elected government. The seemingly innovative and comprehensive solutions applied to bring an end to the northern insurgency, involving traditional African values of consensus and economic complementarity, appeared to illustrate the resiliency and effectiveness of democratic rule in Mali, as well as the statesman-like reputations of the country's new leaders, ATT and Alpha Konaré. Mali emerged from the 1990–1995 insurgency as an example of moderate, cooperative rationality and as a model of democratic governance and

163 Morgan, 2012, p. 2–4.

creative problem solving for the rest of the African continent. Internationally, Mali had become the new donor darling as development aid poured in and the economy showed steady, impressive growth rates.

Domestically, however, darker signs were emerging, signs that at first either escaped the scrutiny of international observers or were dismissed or minimized by them. These signs were several, and they emerged in various sectors of the economy and society. For one thing, the Northern Conflict had been more violent and bitter, and the levels of ethnic animus and communal violence had been more severe than most on the outside realized. The bitterness and racial tensions that had animated the *Alfellaga* in the 1960s had not gone away, but rather they had been nurtured in the consciousness of the Tuaregs in exile. This bitterness and racial consciousness had been exacerbated by the droughts of the l970s and 80s, and they rose to the surface again in the *al-Jebha* insurgency of the 1990s.[164] Another dark sign was that the infusion of international aid, as well as the on-paper economic growth, had not been at all well distributed, either across class and economic divides or across the regional divides within the country. Indeed, the currency devaluation of 1994 had made life much worse for ordinary Malians, even many of those who thought of themselves as middle class. Other problems, including the school crisis and persistent low voter turnout, were eating away at the country's sense of itself as a progressive, inclusive society with a common goal and a common sense of national destiny. Perhaps the most serious of Mali's many systemic problems was also the least recognized by outsiders, namely the entrenched corruption that had permeated the nation's electoral system, civil administration, and even its military, as well as many other sectors of society. This pervasive corruption grievously undermined the people's faith in democratic institutions and greatly exacerbated the already poor distribution of wealth and social benefits. Worse yet, it was wrecking the people's sense of shared endeavor, common sacrifice, and striving together to build a better future.

By the time of the 2006 to 2009 insurgency, also based in the country's northern regions, the Malian people, if not the international community, had come to understand the democracy was failing, the economy was in crisis, and racial and ethnic tensions were as fierce and ingrained as ever. The innovative and comprehensive solutions that had been used to bring an end to the insurgency of the 1990s had not proved workable long term, and had in fact proved as illusory as Mali's democracy and economic growth. Most seriously, the 2006–2009 rebellion unmasked the toxic mix of racial hatred, political and economic corruption, official collusion, cocaine smuggling, kidnapping and human trafficking, and even Islamic radicalism and terrorism that had become entrenched, especially in the north. Mali was again caught up in regional and international pressures beyond its control. These pressures included an upsurge of radical Islam across

164 Lecocq, 2005, p. 55; Badi, Dida. "Cultural Interaction and the Artisanal Economy in Tamanrasset" in James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 201.

the region, from Algeria to Nigeria, a destabilization of the region's Saharan and Sahelian core, a sweep of securitization initiatives and militarization emanating from the United States as part of its Global War on Terror (GWOT), as well as a lucrative and violent international and intercontinental traffic in hard drugs, tobacco products, kidnapping victims, and labor migrants, all controlled from the outside by multinational criminal organizations and protected and defended by armed radical Islamist terrorists. But as bad as things were by 2009 and 2010, Mali's worst times lay ahead. These international political, economic, criminal, and extremist forces would literally tear the country in half, ending all pretense of democratic rule, religious and ethnic tolerance, economic growth, and national cohesion and stability. This social, economic, cultural, military, and religious catastrophe will be the subject of Chapters 5 through 7. But first, in Chapter 4, we will examine related developments at the other end of the North and West African meta-region, northern Nigeria.

Chapter 4
Nigeria: The Growth of Radical Islam

Introduction

Nigeria is the outlier of the North and West African meta-region I have attempted to define in this volume; however it is clearly part of West Africa, and at least part of northern Nigeria is within the Sahel zone. It is impossible, therefore, to conduct a thorough study of the problems of terror and insurgency in the West African Sahara-Sahel zone without considering the radical Islamic movements of northern Nigeria, especially Boko Haram, which constitutes both a terrorist organization and an insurgency. The near-failed state in Nigeria,[1] along with the porous borders and un-policed spaces of the Saharan reaches of Mali and Niger, has become an environment conducive to radical Islam and terrorism. Communal violence in northern Nigeria has reached shocking proportions, and radical, extremist Islamist groups like Boko Haram are perpetrating terrorist attacks against local, national, and international targets. Boko Haram and its more internationalist offshoot Ansaru have recently been officially designated as terrorist organizations by the US Department of State, though they have been considered as such by observers for some time.[2] Further, Boko Haram's record of attacks on police and security forces, including bombing the National Police headquarters in the federal capital Abuja, along with its stated goal of overthrowing the government, qualifies it as an insurgency. Algeria-based AQIM pursues kidnappings, contraband, and assassinations in Mali's arid northern reaches, and may actually be linked to Boko Haram. Niger, meanwhile, is confronted by AQIM inroads in the north and the expansion of Nigerian radical Islamist groups in the south, including Boko Haram. Increasingly, foreign, radical strains of Islam are influencing more traditional West African Muslim communities in Nigeria and other Sahelian countries. In Mali there is Saudi-funded Wahhabism in Bamako, and the Algeria-based AQIM in Kidal. In Niger, the Nigerian Yan Izala has spread among Hausa populations in the south, as has Boko Haram, while AQIM kidnappings have occurred in the Nigerian desert. In Nigeria there are the Saudi-funded Yan Izala, Taliban-inspired Boko Haram, and even the Iran-supported Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN). Several factors make it necessary for us to examine radical Islam in northern Nigeria: With at least one bona fide terrorist organization, as well as an ongoing

1 Tijani, Kyari. "Boko Haram: Reflections of a Nigerian Progressive." *Annual Review of Islam in Africa*. No. 10, 2008–2009, p. 12.

2 "Nigeria: U.S. Names 2 Nigerian-Based Groups Terrorist Organizations." Voice of America. November 13, 2013. p. 1.

national anti-government insurgency in Nigeria, Nigeria must be a critical and inseparable part of any study of terror and insurgency in West Africa.

Background: Islam in West Africa

There are 150 million Muslims in West Africa, some 15 percent of the world's total Muslim population.[3] Islam in West Africa can be divided into two main categories. The first category is moderate Islam, usually traditional and/or indigenous, including the Sufi brotherhoods and various Islamic civic organizations.[4] Sufism dates from the fifteenth century in West Africa, though it became entrenched in the nineteenth.[5] It stresses individual spiritual development as well as the master-disciple relationship and the veneration of past Sufi masters. Sufi brotherhoods have a reputation for resisting injustice, whether social corruption, colonial rule, or post-independence tyranny. Only the Sufi leaders have the moral authority to challenge the propaganda of radical West African Islamist groups and terrorist organizations.[6] Moderate West African Muslims are regarded by some observers as "important counterweights" to more rigid Middle Eastern strains of Islam. This moderation is linked to the Sufi model of individual spiritual development, as opposed to forced conformity to the group that is typical of radical movements of the Islamic heartlands.[7] Islam is popular in West Africa partly because of the compatibility of aspects of Sufism with elements of traditional African spirituality including saint veneration and mysticism.[8]

The second category is radical Islam, usually modernist and frequently funded from abroad. Radical Islam in West Africa takes two forms of its own, including reformist Islam and terrorist movements. Reformist groups are linked to the Islamic revival movement of the 1970s. It began in the Middle East, especially Egypt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and spread to Algeria, as mentioned in Chapter 2, in the 1930s. But it built up momentum in West Africa, including Nigeria in the 1970s, though West African reformist groups are generally less radical than their Middle Eastern and Egyptian counterparts, at least until recently. West African reformists seek to purify Islam by opposing saint veneration and adopting Middle Eastern and North African elements like the veiling and cloistering of women, but they do not, generally, seek to impose an Islamic system of government. Examples include the Nigerian Yan Izala

3 Sacirbey, Omar. "Black Muslims look to West Africa for a moderate Islam." Religion News Service, June 16, 2008, hp. 1.

4 "Islam and Sufism in West Africa," *Seyfettin.* November 15, 2007, p. 2.

5 Hill, Jonathan N.C. "Sufism in Northern Nigeria: Force for Counter-Radicalization?" US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, May 2010, p. 15.

6 Wright Zakariya. "Sheikh Tijani Cisse travels to Mali, Ivory Coast, Nigeria." *The Tariqa Tijaniyya.* April 2009, p. 2.

7 Sacirbey, 2008, p. 1.

8 "Islam and Sufism in West Africa," 2007, p. 2.

movement and Malian Wahhabis. They often receive outside financial support from such sources as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Sudan, and even sometimes Iran.[9] The only active terrorist group in West Africa prior to 2008 was AQIM, which operated in the Sahara and Sahel. It has carried out attacks and kidnappings for ransom in the Sahelian countries, including Mauritania, Mali, and Niger.[10] Nigeria's, Boko Haram has, since at least 2011, also behaved like an Islamist terrorist organization perpetrating VBIED and suicide attacks, including attacks against civilians as well as international targets. This chapter will examine the development of reformist and radical Islam in Nigeria in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Nigerian Political History

Nigeria, as sociologist Annalisa Zinn points out, is a country of contradictions. Despite being regarded as a "beacon of hope for democracy" at independence in 1960, the country has been under military governments for some 29 years of its independence. Despite being the world's sixth largest petroleum exporter, it is among the world's 20 poorest countries. And, although it is a federation of 36 states, Nigeria's fiscal regime is highly centralized with its oil revenues going largely to the federal government.[11] Nigeria is Africa's largest country by far in terms of population, with an estimated 175 million inhabitants, 50 percent of whom are Muslim and 40 percent of whom are Christian.[12] There are more than 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria, including three main ethnicities that number in the tens of millions each, making them comparable in size to important European national groups. The three main groups are the Hausa-Fulani of the north, the Ibo of the southeast, and the Yoruba of the southwest. There are also several important minority groups, including the Ijaw of the Niger Delta, where the oil resources are found. Nigeria's Muslim population resides mostly in the semi-arid Sahel region of northern Nigeria, which has few natural resources. Agriculture, livestock, and commerce are the economic mainstays, giving northern Nigeria much in common with other Sahelian countries of West Africa. The south has Lagos, the commercial hub for much of West Africa, and the oil-rich Niger Delta, which contains

9 Kane, Ousmane. "Moderate revivalists: Islamic inroads in sub-Saharan Africa." *Harvard International Review,* 29 (2), Summer, 2007.

10 Harmon, Stephen. "From GSPC to AQIM: The Evolution of an Algerian Islamist Terrorist Group into an al-Qa'ida Affiliate and its Implications for the Sahara-Sahel Region." *Concerned Africa Scholars Bulletin, N°85 US militarization of the Sahara-Sahel: Security, Space & Imperialism.* Spring, 2010, p. 13.

11 Zinn, Annalisa. "Theory versus Reality: Civil War Onset and Avoidance in Nigeria since 1960." Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (eds), *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis.* Vol.1: Africa. Washington DC: World Bank, 2005, p. 89.

12 CIA World Factbook, "Nigeria." 2013.

90 percent of Nigeria's lucrative hydrocarbon sector.[13] Thus Nigeria, like Algeria, reaps massive rents from its hydrocarbon resources, though the benefits are poorly distributed across the country.

Islam was introduced in northern Nigeria in medieval times via at least two vectors, from the Kingdom of Bornu by the end of the eleventh century, and from the Western Sudan by Wangara merchants in the fourteenth century. At first an elite religion, Islam has been entrenched in the north since the Fulani Jihad of Shaykh Usman dan Fodio (d. 1817) in the early nineteenth century. Shaykh Usman founded the Sokoto Caliphate, which stretched across what is today northern Nigeria as well as into parts of Niger and Cameroon. Islam became a feature of Hausa-Fulani culture and tradition. Shaykh Usman and his jihad leaders were associated with the Qadiriyya Sufi Brotherhood, Usman having studied under the Kunta Shaykhs of the central Sahara. Indeed, Shaykh Usman was the first head of the Qadiriyya in the Caliphate and the original Sultan of Sokoto.[14] The Sokoto Caliphate accomplished at least one important political change in what was to become northern Nigeria: the welding together of the formerly independent Hausa city-states under a central government. The Hausa city-states had long retained a non-unified city-state political format, each ruled by an independent king. These kings, called Habe Kings by the Fulbe and simply the "old kings" by the Hausa, ruled over some 14 Hausa city-states, some of which were nominally Muslim. Despite sharing a common language, culture and religious tradition that, theoretically at least, could have served as the basis of a unitary state, the Hausa did not form such a state until they were brought together under the Caliphate. Shaykh Usman used violent military jihad to overthrow the Habe Kings, whom he regarded as hypocritical (*munafiq*) Muslims for professing Islam but not practicing it. He established the rule of religious scholars (Arabic: *ulema*), who legitimized their rule by means of "theological argumentation."[15] The Sokoto Caliphate became the largest, most powerful, and most enduring of the West African jihad states emerging from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. It also put up some of the stiffest resistance to colonial occupation, the last of the Caliphate's fortified towns surrendering to the British in the early 1900s. The Caliphate, along with what was to become the rest of the colony of Nigeria, became a British sphere of influence as a result of decisions made at the Congress of Berlin in 1885. British colonial rule in northern Nigeria began with the fall of the Caliphate in the early twentieth century. Islam thrived in the north under colonial rule, 1903–1960, as British administrators counted on the political support of the Sultan of Sokoto to keep the colony running smoothly. As in the French colonies, the colonial authorities favored Muslims over non-Muslims because of their literacy and their

13 Stewart, Scott. "The Rising Threat from Nigeria's Boko Haram Militant Group." *Security Weekly.* November 10, 2011, p. 2.

14 Hill, 2010, p. 15.

15 Loimeier, Roman. "Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria." *African Spectrum,* 47 (2–3), 2012, p. 139.

business skills and because of their disdain for the customs and practices of the "pagan" Nigerians, a disdain they shared with the British. Colonial rule led to the establishment of British education and British law. Combined with the impact of the colonial and post-colonial economy, these elements of Western culture and civilization ultimately led to a "deep crisis" in Nigerian Muslim society that Islamic Africa expert Roman Loimeier calls "modernization shock."[16]

Independence came to Nigeria in 1960 as part of the wave of decolonization that swept across much of the African continent between 1960 and 1964. Despite high hopes, independence did not bring the promised economic prosperity and democratic governance. Instead, these hopes were dashed by corruption and the failure of Nigerian democracy.[17] By most indices of social and economic development, conditions actually worsened in Nigeria in the post-independence period.

1. Illiteracy is higher today than at independence.
2. Electricity production is lower.
3. The percentage of people in poverty has increased.
4. The gap between rich and poor has grown.
5. Legendary corruption has emerged and become entrenched in government.
6. Episodes of military rule have weakened the democratic ethos.
7. Nigeria registered a negative 0.1 growth rate in the period 1975–2005.[18]

In addition, over 70 percent of Nigerians are food insecure. Clearly the state has failed to serve the masses.[19] The inability of the post-independence state after 1960 to improve economic conditions led to a rise in militancy in Islam in the Muslim north and a hope that Islamic solutions could bring prosperity and justice. The general failure of Nigerian secular governance resulted in the enactment of a shariah penal code in 12 of Nigeria's 36 states, all in the north, beginning in 2000–2001.[20] The adoption of shariah in the north was largely due to the fact that people were fed up with state corruption and dysfunction and hoped that shariah courts would bring justice where secular courts had failed.[21] Shariah civil law code was already in place in northern Nigeria, so a shariah penal code seemed a

16 Loimeier, 2012, p. 139.

17 Tijani, 2009, p. 13.

18 Hill, 2010, p. 29.

19 Tijani, 2009, p. 15.

20 Brulliard, Karin. "In Nigeria, Sharia Fails to Deliver: Vows of Accountability, Equity under Moderate Islamic Law are Unmet." *Washington Post*. August 12, 2009a, p. A10; Hill, 2012, p. 2

21 The Financial Transparency Coalition lists Nigeria at the top of the list for rates of bribery violations, most concentrated in the country's petroleum sector. Hollingshead, Ann. "The Cost of Bribery." *Financial Transparency Coalition.* November 23, 2011. Mintz Group.

logical next step.[22] But conditions have not changed despite the introduction of Islamic law. Corruption persists, the state still defaults on provision of services, and ordinary people still cannot get justice, even in the shariah courts. Politicians who support the application of shariah law are often trying to cover for their own failures by pretending to fight immorality. It has become clear to people in the north that shariah law and the democratic government that enacted it have failed to overcome the massive structural dysfunction that has characterized the Nigerian state since independence.[23]

Map 4.1 Nigeria

Credit: Max Rinkel

22 Loimeier, Roman. "Nigeria: The Quest for a Viable Religious Option" in William F.S. Miles (ed.) *Political Islam in West Africa: State-Society Relations Transformed*. London: Lynne Rienner, 2007, p. 65.

23 Brulliard, 2009a, p. 1.

Moderate Islam in Nigeria

The Sufi Brotherhoods

Islam in Nigeria prior to the 1950s was characterized by relative moderation and accommodation. Part of this moderate Islamic tradition was due to the Sufi brotherhoods, which were introduced to Nigeria as early as the fifteenth but especially in the nineteenth century. The two dominant Sufi brotherhoods (*tariqa)* were the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya. The Qadiriyya Brotherhood was, as mentioned above, established by Shaykh Usman dan Fodio, founder of the Sokoto Caliphate, who had studied under the Kunta Shaykhs of the southern Sahara desert (modern Niger), who were themselves Qadiriyya scholars. The Caliphate disseminated the Qadiriyya throughout northern Nigeria and into parts of Yorubaland in the southwest. The Tijaniyya was introduced by Shaykh al-Hajj Umar Tal of Senegal during his return from the pilgrimage (*hajj*) in the 1840s, when he passed through the Sokoto Caliphate. The Tijaniyya was reinforced in Nigeria by followers of Shaykh al-Hajj Umar's son Shaykh Ahmad al-Kebir, the effective ruler of the Tijaniyya-based jihad state established along the Middle Niger in 1860. Shaykh Ahmad and some of his followers fled the French conquest of the Soudan (modern Mali) in the late nineteenth century, settling ultimately in the northwestern part of the Sokoto Caliphate where Shaykh Ahmad himself was born.[24] New Tijaniyya *silsila*[25] were introduced to Nigeria in the early twentieth century by Ibrahim Niasse of Senegal.

Expansion of the Brotherhoods

Beginning in the 1950s, the brotherhoods were converted into mass movements by opening their membership to all Muslims, whereas they had previously been more exclusive. The Tijaniyya was opened up by Ibrahim Niasse. The Nigerian Tijaniyya is now led by Shaykh Ismail Ibrahim Khalifa. Tijaniyya shaykhs have *silsila* from such prestigious houses as Fez, where the *tariqa's* founder Shaykh Ahmad Tijani resided until his death in 1815; Ain Mahdi (Algeria), the mother house of the Tijaniyya; and the Tijaniyya house in the Hijaz at Mecca. The Qadiriyya was opened up as a mass movement by Shaykh Nasiru Kabara, who visited Baghdad in1953, where he established a *silsila* stemming from a shaykh of the mother house of the Qadiriyya. Returning to Nigeria, Shaykh Nasiru was made

24 Sheikh Ahmad al-Kebir, who ruled the Tukulor Empire founded by his father Sheikh Umar Tall, was born in a town in the Sokoto Caliphate where his mother, a granddaughter of Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio, lived. Sheikh Umar had been given a Sokoto princess as a bride during his stay in the Caliphate on his return journey from Mecca.

25 Arabic: *chain*. A Sufi's *silsila* lists his master within the order and his master before him and so on. It represents his legitimacy. A Sufi with a direct *silsila* to known, high-ranking masters before him is of great prestige.

grand master of the Nigerian Qadiriyya.[26] Nigeria's Sufi brotherhoods run a range of religious and social programs and services that help make up for the state's chronic default in this area. These programs include religious amenities such as mosques and reading rooms, and educational programs including schools and colleges, lessons and courses. These programs serve students of all levels from age five, and frequently maintain co-educational classes. The programs also pay for radio/TV exposure and public appearances by leading shaykhs.[27] The brotherhoods provide such services partly in an attempt to prevent people from turning to radical factions. These public services compete with similar programs supported by the radicals. They build up loyal followings for the shaykhs, followings that can also be mobilized by their political allies. The brotherhoods lead the fight against the radicals, especially Yan Izala and Boko Haram, and are a major voice for Islamic moderation in Nigeria.[28] Not surprisingly, the brotherhoods, along with the secular authorities, and the Izala movement are among the primary targets of the radical terrorist groups, including Boko Haram.[29]

Radical Islam in Nigeria

These radical groups are often backed by foreign support either from government agencies or private organizations and individuals in countries like Saudi, Iran, Sudan, and Egypt. These funds are partly used to support the social services provided by the radical groups, such as prayer rooms, education, reading rooms, and food and stipends for students. They follow a Salafist tradition that includes anti-Sufism, rejection of saint veneration, especially the master-disciple relationship, and rejection of all un-Qur'anic innovation (*bid'a*), including Malikite law, which is the dominant school of Islamic law in North and West Africa. Nigeria's most influential and best known radical Islamic groups include, among others: 1) the Izala movement which was founded in reaction to the what it regarded as the traditionalism and superstition of the brotherhoods; 2) the violent and obscurantist Maitatsine movement of the late Muhammad Marwa; and 3) the most militant and violent of the current radical Islamist movements, Yusuf Muhammad's Boko Haram.[30]

Yan Izala

Yan Izala (Arabic: *jama'atul izalatul bid'ah wa'ikhamat al-sunnah,* meaning ("the community for the eradication of un-Islamic innovations and the establishment

26 Loimeier, 2007, pp. 46, 48.
27 Hill, 2010, pp. 4, 13, 28.
28 Loimeier, 2007, pp. 48–9.
29 Hill, 2010, pp. 13, 18.
30 Hill, 2010, pp. 4, 18–20, 25.

of the sunnah") began in the 1960s as a reaction to the Sufi brotherhoods. It grew out of an earlier reform movement started by Abubakr Gummi (d. 1992) called Jamma'at Nasr al-Islam (JNI). Gummi's goal was to lead Nigerian Islam away from the traditional, conservative brotherhoods. He competed with the Sufi shaykhs for disciples and political influence. Gummi's movement was later established in 1978 as Yan Izala in the city of Jos in Plateau State by Ismaila Idris, a former army imam.[31] Yan ("members," or "sons" of) Izala still reflected the original anti-Sufi agenda and was still supported by Saudi funding, which Gummi cultivated after making contact with the Kingdom in the 1960s.[32] Yan Izala objected to the Sufi movements because of their innovation (*bid'a*); their spiritual, mystical path; their practice of saint veneration; their resort to the use of amulets; their supererogatory prayers; their conspicuous consumption; and their esoteric episteme (the Sufi shaykh as intercessor between individual believer and God); as well as their closeness to the traditional Muslim authorities, especially the Sultan and his emirs. Yan Izala became Nigeria's most important Muslim reform movement, spreading to neighboring countries, especially Niger, but also Cameroon, and Benin. Its headquarters remained in Jos, in Nigeria's "Middle Belt." The organization is financed by both local and Saudi donors.[33]

Gummi and other reformers of Islam in Nigeria tried to develop programs that would "Islamize modernity" in ways similar to the program of Islamic Modernism developed in the nineteenth century by reformers such as Muhammad Abduh and Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. Its reform program called for modern Islamic schools, even in rural areas, and political and religious mobilization of women, including women's education. It required its followers to break with traditional society, including parents and family, and to reject traditional customs, including bride price and Sufi ritual. Nigerian Islamic reformers criticized the traditional Muslim leadership (*ulema*), including the Sultan of Sokoto and the shaykhs of the brotherhoods, for "being unable to tackle the challenges of modernity."[34] Among the ways in which Gummi sought to counter the influence of the Sufi brotherhoods and their leaders was to go public through the use of radio broadcasts and articles in Nigeria's daily newspapers criticizing the shaykhs as the "major perpetrators of un-Islamic innovation." When the Sufi shaykhs fought back with radio broadcasts of their own, Gummi's followers responded by forming Yan Izala as a "proper reform organization" to challenge the brotherhoods in cities and towns across the country.[35] Yan Izala grew and expanded, even establishing communities in neighboring Cameroon and Niger. But its success often resulted in a degree of moderation of its policies. For example, Yan Izala had always been critical of mainstream Nigerian Muslims as too influenced by the "throwback" brotherhoods

31 Loimeier, 2012, pp. 139–40.
32 Hill, 2010, p. 20.
33 Loimeier, 2007, pp. 51–3.
34 Loimeier, 2012, pp. 139–40.
35 Loimeier, 2012, pp. 141–2.

with their syncretic practices and superstitions. But Yan Izala depended on mainstream Muslims for support and for a source of new recruits, so it was obliged to tone down its criticism of them. By the 1980s, Yan Izala found itself increasingly obliged to make common cause with the Sufi leaders, as Christians, especially Pentecostal Christians, were winning electoral offices because divisions among Muslims split the vote. Even more troubling, by the 1990s, Yan Izala experienced a general split within its own ranks. A younger generation of Izala followers, educated in the modern Islamic schools established by the movement, was finding out their courses of study, including Arabic language, did not open up viable career paths. Even careers within the movement remained elusive because the older generation imams and teachers were not eager to retire. As a result, younger Izala members founded their own schools and mosques that often competed with the established Izala institutions.[36] Veteran Nigeria scholar Murray Last points out that preaching is a career opportunity where few others exist for poor people. He notes further that preachers try to out-radical each other to gather a following.[37] This out-radicaling may help explain the rise of radical preachers such as the founders of the Maitatsine movement and Boko Haram.

The Maitatsine Movement

Reformist Islam in northern Nigeria was always vulnerable to criticism from other radicals either because the reform was not radical enough or because the reform was un-Islamic. The Maitatsine movement, a radical, anti-modern sect, surfaced in the 1980s amid violent clashes with the police and traditional Muslim authorities. The Maitatsine movement was founded by a Cameroonian scholar named Muhammad Marwa, known as Mai Tat Sine ("he who curses"), because of his vocal condemnation of Muslims who did not agree with him. Recruited from jobless urban migrants, his group numbered an estimated 12,000 members by 1980, mostly in the Kano area.[38] Marwa was a convert to Islam with little formal Islamic education. Settling in Kano in 1963, he began as a teacher in Nigeria's *almajiri* system, which featured the apprenticeship of boys aged 10–14 to a Qur'anic school and its teacher. Students in the *almajiri* system came from the ranks of homeless boys, many of whom were recent migrants from the countryside whose parents had moved to urban areas seeking work. The students supported themselves and their master by begging. Their master served as a spiritual guide and father figure to whom they pledged their loyalty. The system allowed for indoctrination of the students into the particular beliefs of the master, thus allowing Marwa the opportunity to create a future rebel force. His abuse of this system resulted in his imprisonment in 1973 for "brainwashing" young boys, some of whom were allegedly abducted. Released in 1976, Marwa continued

36 Loimeier, 2012, pp. 143, 145.
37 Last, 2009, p. 10
38 Zinn, 2005, p. 102; Loimeier, 2012, p. 140.

to recruit homeless gamins who congregated in bus and railway stations. These young recruits received, in exchange for their service and loyalty, food and shelter, albeit minimal, and the camaraderie of a sect. Marwa's indoctrination of the *almajiri* boys included lifelong allegiance, promises of invulnerability to bullets, and a trivialization of death.[39] His extremely anti-modern ideology rejected all non-Qur'anic innovations (*bid'a*), including watches, bicycles, and Western dress, earning him another nickname, "master of rejection."[40]

By 1980, Marwa's Kano enclave housed some 6,000 adepts and was regarded by critics as a "state within a state." The sect leader's outrageous claims, including that he was the last prophet of God, resulted in legal pressure from Muslim and secular authorities who demanded he close his enclave and demolish the illegal housing he had constructed on it. Though these legal efforts were not supported by the courts, they nonetheless prompted him to go on the offensive. Promising martyrdom to those who fell, he sent his followers on a rampage against police stations and mosques.[41] On December 19, 1980, Marwa and his followers attempted to storm Kano's major Friday mosque near the emir's place. Massive retaliation by Nigerian security forces ensued, and after 11 days of fighting, some 4–6,000 people had been killed, including Muhammad Marwa. The movement continued despite the 1980 crackdown, and new clashes occurred throughout the decade. Hundreds more were killed in October 1982 in fighting between Maitatsine sect members and police in Maiduguri and Kaduna. Another thousand were killed in Maitatsine-linked sectarian violence in Gongola State in 1984, and further outbreaks occurred 1985 and as late as 1993.[42] The Maitatsine movement, therefore, represents a radical, extremist Islamist sect that rejected the Islamic modernism of groups like Yan Izala whose reforms they considered un-Islamic and not sufficiently radical. The group lashed out violently against both secular and religious authorities when its community and mission were threatened. As such the Maitatsine movement presaged the most dangerous and obscurantist of the all Nigerian radical Islamist movements, Boko Haram.

Boko Haram

Origins

A new wave of radical ultra-groups has formed in Nigeria since the implementation of shariah law in the north in 2000. The most prominent of these groups appeared as early as the 1990s. It was called *ahl al-sunnah w-al-jama'a w-al-hijra* ("the people of the sunnah and the community [of Muslims]

39 Zinn, 2005, p. 102–3.
40 Loimeier, 2012, pp. 140–41.
41 Zinn, 2005, p. 104.
42 Zinn, 2005, p. 104; Loimeier, 2012, p. 140.

as well as those who emigrate"). The Nigerian press gave the group a series of nicknames, including Yusufiyya, after its leader Mohammed Yusuf, Nigerian Taliban, and finally Boko Haram, which is usually translated as "Western culture is forbidden," or "Western education is a sin." Western education symbolized by the books (Hausa, *boko*) of the British colonial schools, had long been held in contrast to Qur'anic education throughout northern Nigeria.[43] Boko Haram emerged in 2002 in the northeastern city of Maiduguri in Borno State, known for periodic outbursts of sectarian violence between Muslims and Christians, many of whom were from Southern Nigeria.[44] Boko Haram's founder and leader was Ustaz (professor) Mohammed Yusuf of Yobe State, a secondary school dropout who had studied the Quran in Niger and Chad, where he became radicalized. Yusuf and his organization rejected Western education and culture and forbad his followers to accept employment in the civil service. This rejection stemmed partly from the typical Salafist anti-Westernism that grew from its Egyptian roots. It also derived partly from a problem widespread in Africa, including Nigeria; namely, the problem of large numbers of school leavers who have completed a regular course of Western-style education and still cannot find jobs,[45] either because of economic dysfunction or because someone else paid a bribe to secure the position. This problem is particularly acute in Nigeria because of the country's tradition of education, combined with its systematic corruption. Boko Haram gained notoriety through its *hijra* to the village of Kanamma in a remote part of northern Yobe State on the border with Niger, which the leaders of the movement called their Afghanistan.[46] Some 3,000 men, women, and children accompanied them to this *hijra* destination at the end of 2003. The press termed the movement the "Nigerian Taliban" because of practices reminiscent of their South Asian namesake, including the veiling and cloistering of women, their denial of women's access to education, and their violent jihadist format.[47] Yusuf rejected modern science as well as a natural science-based view of the world, which he regarded as Western and secular. For example, he rejected Darwinism and the idea that the world is round, and he attributed rain to divine origins, not to evaporation and condensation of water.[48]

Boko Haram was linked with periodic outbreaks of violence as early as December 2003 and January 2004, when clashes between Boko Haram activists and federal police forces occurred in Yobe State.[49] By 2004, students in universities and technical schools were withdrawing, tearing up their certificates, and

43 Loimeier, 2012, p. 139.

44 Stewart, 2011, pp. 1–2.

45 Onuoha, Freedom C. "The Islamist challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram crisis explained." *African Security Review*, 19 (1), June 2010, p. 58.

46 Onuoha, 2010, p. 55.

47 Hill, 2010, pp. 24, 26.

48 Loimeier, 2012, p. 149; Onuoha, 2010, p. 56.

49 Loimeier, 2012, p. 150.

beginning Qur'anic study and preaching. The sect lived by member dues and by the assets followers surrendered to the group upon joining, as well as by donations from politicians and officials.[50] Though he rejected Western education and the Western scientific world view, Yusuf did not reject Western technology such as mobile phones, medicines, televisions, motorbikes, and automatic weapons, saying that such modern technologies were not inconsistent with an Islamic way of life. As such, Yusuf's anti-modernism was significantly different from that of the Maitatsine movement that rejected un-Qur'anic technology.[51] In September of 2004, Boko Haram activists attacked police stations in Borno State, killing several policemen and capturing arms. Twenty-four members of the sect were killed in a police counterattack, and some of the arms were recovered. After that, the group remained relatively quiet until 2007.[52] The goals of the movement became and remained the overthrow of the Nigerian state, thus qualifying it as an insurgency, and the establishment and strengthening of Qur'anic law throughout the country. It recruits largely from unemployed school leavers, of whom there are many in northern Nigeria, as well as from illiterate and semi-literate youths.[53] In this regard, Boko Haram shows similarities to the Maitatsine movement, as well as in its penchant for violence against secular and religious authorities. Boko Haram became much larger and more extensive, however, than the Maitatsine movement ever did. By 2010 the sect had an estimated 280,000 members, including some in Niger and Chad.[54] Another difference between the two movements, and one that reveals an inner contradiction within Boko Haram itself, is that Mohammed Yusuf lived in relative affluence. His house was comfortable, containing imported canned foods and other modern conveniences. These aspects of Yusuf's personal life contrast markedly with his ideological rejection of Western-style education and with the abject poverty and squalor in which his followers lived and the Spartan diet of dates and grains they ate.[55]

The Boko Haram Revolt, July 2009

An unprecedented eruption of violence occurred in late July 2009 that became known in the press as the Boko Haram Revolt. A local observer, scholar Kyari Tijani, called it a "conflagration" and a "wakeup call" for Nigeria's leaders.[56] It began with a bloody attack on a police station in Bauchi State on July 26. From there

50 Dixon, Robyn. "Nigeria militant group Boko Haram's attacks attract speculation." *Los Angeles Times.* September 13, 2011, p. 2.

51 Last, Murray. "The Pattern of Dissent: *Boko Haram* in Nigeria 2009," *Annual Review of Islam in Africa*, 10, 2008–2009, p. 10; Loimeier, 2012, p. 150

52 Onuoha, 2010, pp. 55–6; Loimeier, 2012, p. 150.

53 Tijani, 2009, p. 14.

54 Onuoha, 2010, pp. 57–8, 63; Stewart, 2011, p. 2.

55 Onuoha, 2010:56, 62.

56 Tijani, 2009, pp. 12, 15.

the violence spread through four northern states of Bauchi, Borno, Yobe and Kano. The fiercest fighting was in Maiduguri, the home base of the sect and the site of Yusuf's residence. The violence was eventually contained by coordinated actions of the federal police and the military, beginning on July 28. Yusuf's residence was bombarded, and two days later he was arrested. Shortly after his arrest he died in police custody in what appeared to be a case of extrajudicial killing. Some 700–800 people, perhaps as many as 1,100, were killed in subsequent riots that were followed by a police crackdown on the movement. By the time the revolt ended on July 30, some 3,500 people had been displaced and many members of the sect killed. In addition, 28 policemen and an undisclosed number of soldiers had died.[57] This spasm of violence served to highlight certain factors that distinguished Boko Haram's violence from other examples of religious-based violence, often severe, that have plagued Nigeria, especially in the north and the Middle Belt, for decades. Previously, most of this violence had been communal violence, generally between Muslims and Christians. There were several such episodes of sectarian strife between 2007 and 2010, especially in Jos, the capital of Plateau State in the Middle Belt, some of which resulted in hundreds dead. Boko Haram's violent episodes were, by contrast, usually directed against the security forces.[58]

In addition, the Boko Haram revolt of July 2009 exemplified certain features of subsequent struggles between Boko Haram and the police and military authorities. One feature was the violence and audacity of Boko Haram, demonstrated by its willingness to attack police and military posts, often using drive-by motorcycle shootings, and to sustain casualties in the process.[59] This level of violence directed at police and military targets is reminiscent of the Algerian violent radical Islamist groups and qualifies Boko Haram as a terrorist organization. The second feature is what scholar and researcher Freedom C. Onuoha calls "jungle justice." Jungle justice, as opposed to legal justice, refers to extrajudicial killings by security forces. Such episodes have come to characterize the response of police and military personnel against Boko detainees. The death of Mohammed Yusuf in police custody, which his followers described as an extrajudicial killing, is often cited as a prime example of jungle justice. Yusuf's death and the deaths of other Boko Haram fighters have often been rationalized by officials, who say that while it may not have been right, the result was for the good.[60] Murray Last notes two views among Nigerians regarding the security forces' handling of the Boko Haram revolt. Some praise police for doing their best to stamp out the movement. Tijani scoffs at the idea of "extra judicial killings" calling police and soldiers "gallant." Other Nigerians, Last insists, complain about police overreaction, especially extra judicial killings[61] In any case, these heavy-handed police and military tactics have

57 Hill, 2010, p. 27; Onuoha, 2010, pp. 58–60; Bullard, 2009b, p. 1.
58 Stewart, 2011, p. 2; Onuoha, 2010, p. 60.
59 Loimeier, 2012, p. 151.
60 Onuoha, 2010, p. 61; Stewart, 2011, p. 2.
61 Last, 2009, p. 7; Tijani, 2009, p. 14.

been widely criticized by international observers, and rights organizations have suggested such brutal reprisals may well be driving people into the arms of Boko Haram.[62] While the main cause of Boko Haram's violence is certainly the extreme obscurantism and obsessive anti-Western bias of the group's ideology, counter-productive tactics by the security forces may be exacerbating and prolonging the problem. Onuoha partly blames systemic government failure for the rise of Boko Haram, including failure to create jobs and opportunities for young school leavers and migrants, failure to act on police reports until the situation got out of hand, failure to control Nigeria's Sahelian borders, and failure to elect competent, responsible officials.[63] These sentiments were later echoed by US Ambassador to Nigeria Terrence McCulley. Speaking in early 2013, McCulley said Nigeria needs to "respect human rights" in its crackdowns on extremists in northern Nigeria and that the regime needs to alleviate poverty in the north as well.[64]

Changes in Capabilities, Targets

Up until about 2010, Boko Haram was regarded as more of an extremist sect than a terrorist organization. [65] After the death of Yusuf in 2009, a 20-man council (Arabic: *shura*) took over leadership of the group and committed to a pattern of escalation, both in tactics and in area of operations.[66] Between 2010 and 2011, observers began to take note of the sect's "rapidly evolving tactical capabilities."[67] Before 2010, Boko Haram's weapons were machetes and small arms. Beginning in 2010, the group added additional tactical capabilities, including motorbike drive-by shootings, Molotov cocktails, and small IEDs. In 2011 VBIEDs (vehicle-borne IEDs, or car bombs) were used, sometimes involving suicide bombers. They also began to expand their target areas from their home bases in Borno and Yobe states to Kano, Jos, and even the Federal Capital District.[68] Their victims in 2010 and 2011 included, as before, dozens of police officers, but also politicians as well as Christian preachers and Muslim clerics who had criticized the group.[69] On November 4, 2010, sect activists committed a string of bombings that targeted, among other locations, a military base in Maiduguri and an anti-terrorism court building in Damaturu. At least 150 people were killed and some suicide attacks were used. These attacks illustrated three examples of Boko Haram's change in

62 Mshelizza, Ibrahim. "Nigeria pledges justice as pressure over killings grows," Reuters. May 1, 2013, p. 1; Hinshaw, Drew and Adam Entous. "On Terror's New Front Line, Mistrust Blunts U.S. Strategy." Wall Street Journal. February 27, 2013, p. 1.

63 Onuoha, 2010, pp. 63–4.

64 Gambrell, Jon. "US: Islamic extremists move between Nigeria, Mali." AP. March 14, 2013, p. 1.

65 Onuoha, 2010, p. 63.

66 Loimeier, 2012, p. 151.

67 Stewart, 2011, p. 1.

68 Stewart, 2011, p. 3; Loimeier, 2012, p. 151.

69 BBC News. June 17, 2011, p. 1.

capabilities: 1) the use of VBIEDs, 2) projection of power beyond their base in Yobe and Borno states, and 3) the training of suicide operatives. These changes in capabilities amount to a "large operational leap."[70]

In 2011, Boko Haram expanded its area of operations to include attacks in the capital city Abuja and its target list to include international targets. In June of 2011, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for a suicide VBIED attack (its first) on Abuja's National Police Headquarters. A parking structure was destroyed, along with 40 vehicles, and three people were killed, including two bombers.[71] In August of 2011, the group claimed responsibility for a massive car bombing of UN Headquarters in Abuja. This attack was similar to the attack on police HQ, though far more deadly—more than 20 people were killed. All together, these changes in tactics, capabilities, and range of targets, as well as the inclusion of international targets, indicate that Boko Haram had changed from a violent extremist group to a jihadist terrorist group with international implications. In 2011 alone, Boko Haram conducted some 70 attacks, killing hundreds of civilians, mostly in the north. Maiduguri was the hardest hit, but some attacks were in the central part of the country, including major cities like Jos and Abuja.[72] This change followed the revolt of 2009 and the subsequent crackdown that resulted in the death of the group's leader Muhammad Yusuf. Loimeier notes a subtle name change that, he argues, "signals a corresponding shift in the programme of the group and a distinct radicalization." The new name of the group became *Jama'at ahl al-sunna l-il-dawa w-al-jihad ala minhaj al-salaf,* which means "the community of the people of the Sunna who fight for the cause [of Islam] according to the method of the Salaf." This name change indicates Boko Haram has gone from a group advocating emigration from the land of unbelief to a group advocating jihad by means of armed struggle against the enemies of Islam. There is evidence these changes in Boko Haram's self-image, capabilities, tactics, and targets are linked to a connection between the group and the Algerian AQIM. There is also evidence indicating Boko Haram fighters may be receiving training from AQIM, possibly in their camps in Mali, and that Boko fighters may have participated in the occupation of northern Mali by AQIM-allied Islamist militias, including MUJAO. This evidence will be examined in Chapter 6.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined the growth and development of reformist and radical Islam in Nigeria, especially violent jihadist Islam as exemplified by the terrorist organization Boko Haram. While the first example of the use of violent jihad in Nigeria dates to the establishment of the Sufi-led Sokoto Caliphate, the

70 Stewart, 2011, pp. 1, 3–4.
71 Stewart, 2011, p. 3.
72 Dixon, 2011, p. 2.

Sufi orders came to represent a moderate, traditional form of Islam during the colonial and post-independence periods, as they did in Mali. Also as in Mali, the failure of the post-independence state to provide services and develop and maintain infrastructure, along with endemic corruption on the part of those charged with guaranteeing order and justice, has weakened the state and the people's confidence in it. Likewise in Nigeria, as in the case of Algeria, the discovery and exploitation of significant petroleum resources has not produced results and benefits that have been shared equitably across the social and regional spectrum. Indeed, in both cases, the actual region of the country where the hydrocarbons are located has benefitted little from its natural bounty, as control of the resources has been usurped either by the central government or by external actors, including foreign oil companies. Rather, the resource wealth has contributed to a climate of self-interest and personal enrichment of the elites, thus further exacerbating the problems of corruption and poverty in both Algeria and Nigeria. This state fragility in Nigeria has created a climate where people were obliged to turn to Islamic organizations to provide such services and certain kinds of infrastructure as well, including educational infrastructure. And when the moderate, traditional Muslim organizations have seemed to be too closely tied to the corrupt and inefficient Nigerian political elites, people have turned to reformist and even violent jihadist movements for support, protection, and justice. The more marginalized the constituency, the more radical and violent are the Islamic organizations to which it is prepared to turn. So marginalized and desperate are some socio-economic sectors in Nigeria they are even willing to support such obscurantist and violent movements as the Maitatsine movement and Boko Haram.

An examination of the growth and expansion of Boko Haram, including its ideology, its recruitment strategy, its base of support, and its leadership, is essential to understanding both the trajectory of Islam in Nigeria and to understanding the modern Nigerian state as a whole. Although Boko Haram is a fringe group largely restricted to the northeastern corner of Nigeria, certain contradictions within the movement mirror similar contradictions apparent within the modern Nigerian state as a whole. One such contradiction would be the relative affluence manifested in the household of the movement's leader Muhammad Yusuf, which contrasts abjectly with the poverty and privation characterizing its rank and file. A similar contradiction persists on the level of the Nigerian state, with its oil-rich elites whose lifestyle contrasts so sharply with that of the vast majority of its people. Yet another contradiction within Boko Haram is the disparity between the promises of utopian purity and justice made by its leadership and the reality of the violence and mayhem that has been visited on the group's followers as well as its enemies. This contradiction mirrors the promise of democracy and prosperity held out by the independent Nigerian state to its people, which contrasts so dramatically with the reality of military rule, neglect of services, and corruption that has actually been delivered. It is ironic that the same types of contradictions within the Nigerian state that fostered Islamic extremism as a reaction would manifest themselves within these very Islamist extremist groups.

It would not be possible to explore the issues of terror and insurgency in North and West Africa without including an examination of Boko Haram and its motivations. First, Boko Haram represents both a campaign of terror against civilians and a sustained anti-government insurgency directed at state security forces. Second, Boko Haram, along with its kidnapping offshoot Ansaru, represents Nigeria's most significant link with the greater campaign of terror and insurgency that has been inflicted by radical Islamist and nationalist groups in Algeria and Mali and in their Saharan core region. The instability in the Sahara and Sahel zones brought on by AQIM terrorism and Tuareg and Bidan insurgency, as well as the US-supported and regional securitization initiatives that have been marshaled to combat it, will be the subjects of Chapter 5. The connections between the Nigerian groups Boko Haram and Ansaru on one hand and the Algerian AQIM and its Malian offshoots Ansar Dine and MUJAO will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5
American Securitization Initiatives in the Sahara-Sahel Zone

Introduction

This chapter will examine attempts by the United States to address growing security concerns in the Sahara-Sahel zone stemming from the Global War on Terror (GWOT) proclaimed by the G.W. Bush administration in the wake of the disastrous attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001. US focus on the Sahara-Sahel region began in the early 2000s when it became apparent Algeria's civil war against Islamist terrorist insurgent groups was spilling into the desert. Security analyst Daniel Volman states that US interests in Africa in the mid-2000s centered on three aspects: 1) a new front on the GWOT, 2) access to Africa's energy supplies, and 3) competition with China for access to Africa's resources.[1] Regional expert Yahia Zoubir sees US interests in the Maghreb, and by extension the Sahara-Sahel zone, as twofold, including political and economic interests focusing on energy concerns and military/strategic interests focusing on security.[2] The 2001 report of US Vice President Dick Cheney's Energy Task Force called for increasing US interest in Africa's oil supplies to reduce dependence on Middle East oil.[3] The Bush administration, following up on concerns raised by the Energy Task Force, defined access to Africa's oil supplies as a "strategic national interest."[4] Algeria is Africa's third largest oil producer, behind Libya and Nigeria, and the US was, in the mid-2000s, Algeria's largest foreign investor in hydrocarbons, amounting to $22 billion in trade in 2008.[5]

In November of 2001, mere weeks after 9/11, President Bush and Algeria's President Abdelaziz Bouteflika met in Washington to discuss their countries' cooperation in the fight against terrorism.[6] This discussion must have borne fruit,

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1 Volman, Daniel. "Why America Wants Military HQ in Africa." *New African*, 469, January 2008, p. 37.

2 Zoubir, Yahia H. "The United States and Maghreb-Sahel security." *International Affairs*, 85 (5), September 2009, p. 977.

3 Klare, Michael and Daniel Volman. "The African 'Oil Rush' and American National Security." *Third World Quarterly*, 27 (4), May 2006, p. 612.

4 Volman, 2008, p. 36.

5 Zoubir, 2009, pp. 982–3.

6 Schanzer, Jonathan. "Algeria's GSPC and America's War on Terror." *Policy Watch,* October 15, 2002. p. 3.

as the following year Algeria's Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC) was placed on the US list of terrorist organizations.[7] Similar concerns over Islamist terrorism were growing regarding other countries in the Sahel zone. Journalist Paul Marshall noted in 2003 that Senegal, Gambia, Niger, Mauritania, "and even historically democratic Mali," were experiencing growing Islamist unrest.[8] Reports of 2004 noted the presence of "foreign extremists," as well as activities by the GSPC in northern Mali. One such report suggested Mali was being targeted by extremists. US Ambassador to Mali Vicki Huddleston said in an interview that year that Salafists from Algeria shared a "bond" with the Tuareg and Arab tribes of northern Mali. Another report claimed the GSPC had many bases and arms caches across the Sahara and that the Group maintained connections with rebel groups in Mali, Niger, and Chad.[9] Algerian scholar Farid Belgaçem described the frontier area between Mali, Algeria, Libya, and Niger as a zone of "permanent insecurity" that had been infiltrated with GSPC activists since June of 2004. He called the Sahara a vast area of contraband in drugs, cigarettes, and arms, as well as human trafficking.[10]

As a result of concerns arising from such reports, the US and its regional allies attempted to implement a series of securitization initiatives to address the linked issues of access to oil resources and protection of US and regional interests against increasingly active Islamist terrorist organizations in the Sahara-Sahel zone. This chapter will discuss the architecture of a series of Saharan-based security initiatives established by the US. These initiatives include the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), established in 2002; the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), established in 2005; and, finally, AFRICOM (Africa Command), a new US military command for Africa created during the last years of the Bush administration and the early years of the Obama administration. This new command was to be distinct from and parallel to both EUCOM, which had jurisdiction for Europe and North Africa, and CENTCOM, which had jurisdiction for the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. We will also examine allegations by critics, especially journalists and activists both in the US and in North and West Africa, as to whether these security concerns may have been overblown, or, more sinisterly, a cover for underlying political and/or economic agendas. Finally, we will note how the focus of the early US initiatives, including the PSI and the TSCTP, defined, inadvertently perhaps, the North and West Africa meta-region that is the broader geographical focus of this volume.

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7 BBC News, 2003. "Profile: Algeria's Salafist Group," May 14, 2003. p. 1.

8 Marshall, Paul. "Radical Islam's Move on Africa," *Washington Post.* October 16, 2003, p. 1.

9 Anderson, Lisa. "Democracy, Islam share a home in Mali," *Chicago Tribune*. December 15, 2004. p. 2; Oukaci, Fayçal. "Le Gspc Voulait libérer le 'Para,'" *L'Expression* (Algeria), July 5, 2004, p. 1.

10 Belgacem, Farid. "Le Niger déclare la guerre au GSPC," *Liberté* (Algeria), January 15, 2005, p. 1.

The Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI)

The Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) was developed specifically to counter GSPC threats to security in the four so-called Sahelian countries, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. The PSI was a military initiative run by the US European Command (EUCOM) between November 2002 and March 2004.[11] It had two objectives: first, to strengthen the capacity of the Sahelian states to fight terrorist organizations, and second, to prevent terrorist groups from establishing bases and strongholds in the region. Teams of US Special Operations Forces (SOF) were deployed to provide training and equipment to the four Sahelian countries to improve border security and to deny the use of their territory to terrorists and criminals.[12] Specifically, the goal of the PSI was capacity building in the security forces of the target countries, including the creation of rapid-reaction forces to pursue terrorists.[13] In the case of Mali at least, as we shall see in Chapter 6, the PSI failed spectacularly in these objectives. The primary motivation for the creation of the PSI was the involvement of the Algerian GSPC in the Sahelian countries. The terrorist organization's presence in the Sahara was signaled in dramatic fashion by the Saharan hostage crisis of 2003, which first came to light between February and April of that year when a total of 32 European tourists originally traveling in seven independent mobile parties were taken hostage by a GSPC cell led by Amari Saïfi, a.k.a. Al-Para. After a gun battle on May 13, 17 of the hostages were freed by Algerian security personnel near Illizi near the Tassili N'Ajjer National Park, due east of In Salah and not far from the Libyan border. The rest of the hostages were taken to what we now know to have been the beginnings of a GSPC safe haven in in the Malian Adagh. These hostages were released in August after ransom negotiations.[14] Other factors that helped convince the US to go ahead with the PSI included a coup attempt against Mauritanian President Ma'aouya Ould Taya in June of 2003 that US State Department officials believed, at the time, to be linked to Islamist organizations, and a deadly attack by Al-Para's GSPC cell against an Algerian military convoy in Batna in northeastern Algeria, also in June of 2003, that killed 43 Algerian soldiers. But the catalyst for the full deployment of the PSI was Al-Para's seizure of the 32 European hostages (see Chapter 2).[15]

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11 Piombo, Jessica R. "Terrorism and U.S. Counter-Terrorism Programs in Africa: An Overview" *Strategic Insights*, 6 (1), January 2007, p. 8.

12 Motlagh, Jason. "U.S. eyes Sahara Desert in global terror war." *The Washington Times.* November 17, 2005, p. 1; Zoubir, 2009, p. 989; Klare and Volman, 2006a, p. 618.

13 Piombo, 2007, p. 8.

14 Schanzer, Jonathan. "Countering Algerian Terror: Increased U.S. Involvement?" *The Washington Institute Policy Watch/Peace Watch,* October 28, 2003, p. 1.

15 Miles, William F.S. "Islamism in West Africa: Introduction," *African Studies Review*, 47 (2), September 2004, p. 58**;** Mellah, Salima and Jean-Baptiste Rivoire, 2005. "El Para: The Maghreb's Bin Laden," *Le Monde* diplomatique, February 2005, p. 1; Smith, Craig. "U.S. Training African Forces to Uproot Terrorists," *New York Times.* May 11, 2004, p. 2.

Groundwork for the PSI began as early as October 2002, as US counter-terrorism teams visited the four targeted countries to assess their level of interest in participating in the initiative. Convinced of the four countries' willingness to participate, the US established the PSI in November. Representatives from the Department of State visited the four countries that same month to announce formally the inauguration of the PSI. By early 2003, the US Department of Defense (DoD) was already sending Marine and Army SOF teams to Mali to upgrade its anti-terrorism capabilities.[16] Al-Para's kidnapping of the 32 hostages became Defense's core justification for expanding US military presence in the Sahel. Gen. Charles F. Wald (USAF), Deputy Commander of EUCOM, called the kidnapping a "blessing in disguise." The release of the last of the hostages was mediated by Mali's President Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT). After the end of the hostage crisis in August 2003, Gen. Wald called the defense chiefs of the PSI countries and other regional states to a meeting at EUCOM headquarters in Stuttgart. In a two-day meeting with heads of the armed forces of seven Maghrebi and Sahelian sates, Wald and his conferees discussed coordination of their anti-terrorist efforts.[17] Further motivation for US involvement in the Sahelian countries, if any was needed, was provided by the fact that Al-Para used the ransom money he collected for the release of the hostages to buy arms in the Algeria-Mali border area.[18] Congress appropriated $7.75 million to train special armed forces units in the target countries to resist terrorism. Ultimately some 1,200 troops received training in the four Sahelian countries.[19] Baz Lecocq says more than half of the PSI budget was focused on northern Mali, especially the on border region with Algeria.[20]

The first action involving troops trained under the PSI regime came after US satellite images in December of 2003 picked up the trail of Al-Para's convoy transporting arms in the Algeria-Mali border area. Al-Para had used the ransom money to buy arms and raise recruits in Mali, and he was heading back to Algeria with the weapons when the pursuit of the terrorists began.[21] The US military notified the Malians, and Malian troops chased the Salafist convoy into Niger in January

16 Marshall, 2003, p. 2; Katchadourian, Raffi. "Pursuing Terrorists in the Great Desert: The U.S. Military's $500 Million Gamble to Prevent the Next Afghanistan." *The Village Voice,* January 31, 2006, p. 4.

17 Katchadourian, 2006, pp. 2, 5, 8; Magister, Sandro. "Worldwide Islam Has and Oasis of Democracy: Mali," *L'espresso*. 2004, p. 2; Zoubir, 2009, p. 998; Smith, 2004, p. 2.

18 Mcelroy, Damien. "US extends the war on Islamic terror to the Sahara Desert," *NEWS telegraph.* 2004, p. 1. A known Zawahiri associate, Ahmed Alwan was killed in Batna in late 2002. Alwan's presence in Algeria was reportedly an additional factor motivating the development of PSI (Smith, 2004, pp. 1–2).

19 Holzbaur, Christine. "La chasse aux salafistes du désert," *L'Express*. June 28, 2004, p. 1; Harris, Edward, "U.S. Green Berets train Mali troops to guard desert interior against terrorists, bandits," Associated Press Worldstream. March 17, 2004, p. 2; Anderson, 2004, p. 7.

20 Lecocq, 2020, p. 387.

21 Smith, 2004, p. 2.

of 2004.This action set in motion the dramatic chase of Al-Para's cell across the desert, culminating in his capture in Chad in March of 2004, as described in some detail in Chapter 2. Troops from Mali, Niger, and Chad participated in the pursuit, with considerable support from Algerian troops and some US personnel, along with US air support. US Navy P-3 Orion aircraft operating out of the Algerian air base at Tamanrasset gathered intelligence and fed it to Chadian troops. Two US C-130 Hercules cargo planes were dispatched from Ramstein AFB in Germany on short notice to lift supplies to Chadian troops at Faya-Largeau air base as they closed in on Al-Para.[22] The capture of Al-Para, a former lieutenant of Hassan Hattab and a founder of the GSPC, was considered a major coup by the US, the first fruit of the Pan-Sahel Initiative.[23] In addition to capturing a major target of the GWOT in the Sahara, the PSI was regarded as a means of furthering a long-standing goal of the US military, namely that of transitioning from large, powerful bases to smaller, more flexible bases with limited personnel, as well as making use of US-trained regional troops. The incident appeared to represent a success of the PSI on several counts. First, it won the cooperation of the four Sahelian states. Second, it achieved the specific objective of capturing a bona fide GSPC terrorist commander in the Sahara. Third, it used logistical assets of both the United Sates and Algeria, America's regional partner in the GWOT, as well as US-trained regional security forces. Fourth, it led directly to an expansion of the funding and scope of the program in the form of the TSCTP.[24] Lecocq offers a critique of this analysis, saying that the actual capture of Al-Para and his men was not due to US high-tech intelligence and equipment, but to Chadian rebels using low-tech "Teknikals" and Kalashnikovs, as well as the *télégraphe saharien*, local knowledge and word-of-mouth information.[25]

The Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP)

The Pan Sahel Initiative transitioned to the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership, or Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI), as it was at first called, during 2004–2005. The TSCTI (later TSCTP) was created to address concerns similar to those that had prompted the development of the PSI. EUCOM's concerns in the Sahara, besides the inroads of Algerian Salafist terrorists, included fears that trafficking in arms, drugs, and labor migrants would combine with poverty and unemployment to create "potential for instability," according to Maj. Holly Silkman, a EUCOM public affairs officer who described the Sahara as the

22 Katchadourian, 2006, pp. 8–9; Zoubir, 2009, p. 992; Volman, 2008, p. 39.

23 Holzbaur, 2004, p. 1; Donnelly, 2004, pp. 1–2.

24 Mellah and Rivoire, 2005, p. 7.

25 Lecocq, Baz and Paul Schrijver. "The War on Terror in a Haze of Dust: Potholes and Pitfalls on the Saharan Front." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 25 (1), January 2007, p. 145.

"Wild West."[26] Gen. Wald began pushing for an expansion of the PSI right after the engagement between Chadian troops and Al-Para's fighters. After intense lobbying by military personnel before Congress in March of 2004, this expansion resulted in the creation of the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP).[27] Specifically, EUCOM officials, including Maj. Gen. Thomas R. Csrnko, argued there was a possibility of Qa'ida training camps comparable to those in Afghanistan appearing in the Sahara. They also suggested fighters from Maghrebi and Sahelian countries then training in Iraq might transit back to North and West Africa to teach terror techniques learned in Iraq to recruits there.[28] The prevailing belief among EUCOM leadership was that the 150 or so troops that had been trained by US SOF teams in the four Sahelian countries under the PSI would not be enough to deal with scenarios like those described before Congress. If the Sahara were to become a terrorist haven, as Afghanistan once had been, and if the illicit trafficking of arms and labor migrants were to continue and even increase, then more troops in friendly countries would have to be trained, and the training programs would have to be expanded to additional regional countries.[29] Ultimately Congress agreed to a budget for the TSCTI of $16 million for 2005, $30 million for 2006, and $100 million for each of the next five years.[30] The TSCTP differed from the PSI in two major respects. First, it was an inter-agency operation. Run by State, it also incorporated Defense, Treasury, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Its mission included, in addition to military training and support, public diplomacy and encouragement for democratic governance. Defense was to handle the military assistance programs through EUCOM. This portion of the TSCTP was called Operation Enduring Freedom—Trans Sahara (OEF-TS).[31] Secondly, the TSCTP was expanded to cover a total of nine countries. In addition to the four original Sahelian countries covered by the PSI, the new countries included, significantly, Algeria and Nigeria, as well as Morocco, Senegal, and Tunisia.[32] This expanded target area for the TSCTP indicates a realization on the part of EUCOM leaders, as well as by the US Congress, that North and West Africa comprise, as I have argued, a cohesive meta-region linked by economic, cultural, and political commonalities, as well as strategic exigencies.

The TSCTP began operations in June of 2005, providing expertise and materiel to nine North and West African countries. The goal of the TSCTP was to enhance

26 Motlagh, 2005, p. 1.

27 Klare, Michael and Daniel Volman. "America, China, and the Scramble for Africa's Oil." *Review of African Political Economy*, 33 (108), June 2006, p. 300; Katchadourian, 2006, pp. 9–10.

28 Motlagh, 2005, pp. 2–3.

29 Koch, Andrew. "US to bolster counter terrorism assistance to Africa," *Jane's Defence Weekly*. October 1, 2004, p.1.

30 Piombo, 2007, p. 8.

31 Piombo, 2007, p. 8.

32 Motlagh, 2005, p. 1.

the capacity of regional governments to patrol and protect the remote terrain of the Sahara-Sahel region. Operationally, the most important component of the partnership was Operation Flintlock, an annual or bi-annual counter-terrorism (CT) exercise involving target countries and their security forces. The purpose of Operation Flintlock was: 1) to coordinate security along remote Saharan borders, and 2) to strengthen patrols in ungoverned territories. US SOF teams would train their counterparts to interdict terrorism and prevent the establishment of bases and sanctuaries for terrorist organizations.[33] The first Operation Flintlock, also known as Exercise Flintlock, began training troops in nine nations in June of 2005. Successive Flintlock operations were held in 2007 and in 2009. The one in 2009 actually began in November 2008, and involved training of troops in 14 nations.[34] Flintlock 11 began in February 2011 in Thiés, Senegal. It involved 16 nations. A major element of Flintlock 11 was the addition of a new component called the Trans-Saharan Security Symposium (TSS) a "civil-military cooperation and interagency capacity-building event" coordinated by USAID. The idea of the TSS was to encourage participating nations to coordinate counter-terrorism (CT) efforts with civilian officials in various government ministries in conjunction with the US-trained security forces of those same nations. It was an example of the inter-agency approach of the TSCTP.[35]

While the purpose of the TSCTP was to train special CT units in the target countries, there is some evidence the partnership also supported the presence of US SOF forces, at least in Mali, for other than training missions alone. Lecocq claims the TSCTP funded the readying of the strategic Tessalit air base in the Malian Kidal Région for use in counter-terrorism. He suggests, citing unconfirmed reports, the Tessalit air facility in fact became a base for US troops. He also says US troops were similarly stationed near Gao and Timbuktu along the Niger bend.[36] If true, these reports would seem to corroborate evidence given by one of my interview respondents, the young father displaced from Gao, who said US troops were stationed near Aguelhok and Gao shortly before MNLA rebels occupied those towns in early 2012. He said US personnel from those bases tried to warn Malian army officers the rebels were advancing, but the officers would not take the warnings seriously. The respondent said that after their warnings went unheeded the US personnel vacated their posts, and Aguelhok and Gao were both soon

33 Zoubir, 2009, p. 990; Motlagh, 2005, p. 1; "Fresh thinking urged to fight terrorism in Sahel: Analysts say more joint intelligence-gathering, crackdown on organized crime, coordination are needed to tackle AQIM's growing power." *Middle East Online,* October 8, 2010, p.3.

34 Zoubir, 2009, p. 990.

35 Purtell, Bryan (Maj.). "Flintlock 11 Kicks Off February 21 in Senegal/Media Opportunities," United States Africa Command. February 3, 2011, p. 1.

36 Lecocq, 2010, p. 387.

overrun by MNLA forces, with support from, at least in the case of Aguelhok, Ansar Dine fighters.[37]

There have been criticisms of the TSCTP from various quarters. In 2009, journalist Karin Brulliard, referring to the training provided to Malian forces under TSCTP, quoted a Western diplomat in Bamako as saying the training had been "not very effective."[38] That assessment, however cursory, appears to have been borne out, given the abject collapse of Malian forces in the north of the country in the face of the onslaught by MNLA forces in March and April of 2012. National security expert Jessica Piombo has suggested some TSCTP countries labeled any domestic political opponents as "terrorists" in order to garner access to the military support in training and equipment offered by the partnership.[39] And Daniel Volman claims Malian security forces have "most likely" used US security assistance, including military materiel, against Tuareg insurgents, despite the fact that they are secular nationalist insurgents and not part of AQIM.[40] Whatever the assessment of the TSCTP, it was clear that the US under the Obama administration was doubling down on the multi-agency approach to CT in North and West Africa, and indeed on the rest of the continent as well. As the PSI expanded into the TSCTP, the TSCTP was similarly rolled into AFRICOM, the relatively new, separate US military command for Africa. AFRICOM replaced EUCOM as the military command responsible for Africa, including CT efforts across the continent.

The US Africa Command (AFRICOM)

In February of 2007 President Bush announced the creation of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM). Until then, responsibility for US military affairs in Africa had been divided among three US military unified (multi-service) regional commands, including CENTCOM, which had jurisdiction over Egypt and the Horn of Africa; EUCOM, which had control of most of the continent; and PACCOM, which had responsibility for Madagascar.[41] In October of 2007, AFRICOM "opened its doors" in Stuttgart as a sub-unified command under EUCOM. A year later, in October of 2008, AFRICOM became a fully operational command, responsible for everything the US does military in Africa. AFRICOM is still based in Stuttgart because no suitable African country has yet been found willing to host it. As of 2010, only Liberia and Morocco had offered to host a permanent base for

37 Interview 113 (Displaced young father from Gao) Part 2.

38 Brulliard, Karin. "Radical Islam meets a buffer in West Africa," *The Washington Post.* December 21, 2009, p. 2.

39 Piombo, 2007, p. 1.

40 Volman, Daniel. (2010a) "Obama Expands Military Involvement in Africa," Anti-War.com. April 03, 2010, p. 11.

41 Volman, 2008, p. 36; Nhamoyebonde, Tichaona. "AFRICOM—Latest U.S. Bid to Recolonise the Continent."*The Herald* (Zimbabwe), January 7, 2010), p. 3.

AFRICOM. Other countries have hesitated so far, some citing fears of domestic repercussions as a reason. The Southern African Development Community (SADC), whose members include 15 Southern, Eastern, and Central African states stretching from South Africa to the DRC, has gone so far as to preclude the possibility of any of its member states hosting AFRICOM.[42] As a result of this reluctance, the command's only forward operating base is Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, which was established in 2002 and transferred to AFRICOM in 2008.[43]

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced in July of 2007 that the first commander of AFRICOM would be Gen. William "Kip" Ward, an African-American. AFRICOM, like its predecessor the TSCTP, is composed of military and civilian personnel, including officers from State and USAID. This composition is a further example of what Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Africa Theresa Whelan called a "paradigm shift" in US policy regarding how the Department of Defense views strategic threats. The paradigm shift refers to a "multi-agency" approach to failed states and structural dysfunction in governments.[44] According to Vice-Admiral Robert T. Moeller, former deputy commander of AFRICOM, the goal of the command is building capacity, first with national militaries in supportive African countries, and second with African regional organizations. To this end, AFRICOM sends small teams to conduct hundreds of capacity building events each year. Topics covered by these capacity building teams include civilian control of military forces, air traffic control, military law, and squad tactics. Some such events had formerly been handled by the TSCTP, but were rolled into AFRICOM along with other programs. For example, AFRICOM has taken over Operation Flintlock training exercises from the TSCTP. Beginning in May of 2010, Exercise Flintlock was conducted in North and West African countries, stressing international cooperation for cross-border threats including traffickers in arms, labor migrants, and drugs, as well as "violent extremist groups."[45]

A similar exercise was conducted in Mali the previous year, between April and June of 2009. A team of US SOF trainers was deployed to Mali to train military forces at "three local bases." The recipient of this training effort was Mali's 33rd Parachute Regiment. According to a deputy commander of the regiment, nearly 95 percent of its personnel has received at least some US training and instruction

42 Roggio, Bill. "Libyan Islamic Fighting Group joins al Qaeda." *Long War Journal*. November 3, 2007, p. 1; Moeller, Robert. "The Truth about AFRICOM: No, the U.S. military is not trying to take over Africa. Here's what we're actually doing." *Foreign Policy*. July 21, 2010, p. 3; Volman, 2010a, p. 11; Nhamoyebonde, 2010, p. 1.

43 Moeller, 2010, p.4. An old French Foreign Legion base, Camp Lemonnier was taken over first by Djibouti's armed forces, and then by the US in the wake of 9/11. Current plans call for a more than $1 billion upgrade so that the camp can host over 1,000 US military personnel.

44 Piombo, 2007, p. 5; Volman, 2008, p. 37.

45 Moeller, 2010, pp. 3, 5–6.

through Operation Flintlock and similar programs.[46] Mali's 33rd Paras, also known as the Red Berets, was the old unit of then-Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT).[47] The Red Berets supported ATT when he overthrew and arrested President Moussa Traoré in May of 1991. And it was to the Bamako camp of the Red Berets where ATT fled when he himself was overthrown in March of 2012, almost exactly 21 years later.[48] These same Red Berets were involved in a shooting incident in late April of 2012 when they attacked strategic points throughout the capital Bamako, including the state broadcasting facility, the international airport, and the army barracks at Kati where soldiers loyal to coup leader Amadou Sanogo were billeted. This incident was described by some observers as a "counter-coup" attempt.[49] At the time of this action, I was at home in the US on the phone with a friend and colleague in Bamako. I could hear intermittent gunshots over the phone.

In October of 2009, the Obama administration announced an important new military aid package for Mali valued at $4.5 to $5 million. This package, which was delivered later that same month, included "37 Land Cruiser pickup trucks, communication equipment, replacement parts, clothing, and other individual equipment." This security assistance package was part of the Counter Terrorism Train and Equip (CTTE) program administered through AFRICOM, and was intended to help Mali deflect threats from AQIM. Later that year, on November 17, 2009, Secretary of State for Africa Johnnie Carson testified before the African Affairs subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that Mali, as well as Algeria and Mauritania, were among the "key countries" in the Sahara-Sahel region with regards to US counter-terrorism strategy. He explained, "We believe that our work with Mali to support more professional units capable of improving the security environment in the country will have future benefits if they are sustained."[50] The Obama administration has always listed AQIM activity in the Sahara and Sahel as the main reason for US involvement in the region. In testimony before the same African Affairs subcommittee during a hearing on counter-terrorism in the Sahara-Sahel region held that same month, then Defense Department Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa and former US ambassador to Mali Vicki Huddleston laid out the administration's case for US counter-terrorism presence in the Sahel. She made four key points:

1. AQIM is a threat to regional and US security,
2. Algeria is a partner in the struggle against AQIM,

46 Volman, Daniel. "Obama moves ahead with AFRICOM." *Pambazuka News*, Issue 461, December 10, 2009, p. 5.

47 "Red Berets, Green Berets: Can Mali's Divided Military Restore Order and Stability?" *Jamestown Foundation.* February 22, 2013.

48 "Mali coup: Arab Spring spreads to Africa," UPI, March 26, 2012), p. 1.

49 Nossiter, Adam. "Loyalists of Mali's Overthrown Leader Appear to Be Attempting Countercoup." *New York Times*. April 30, 2010, p. 1.

50 Volman, 2009, p. 5.

3. Mali is a target of AQIM, and
4. AQIM has a "safe haven" in Mali.[51]

Beginning in the first year of his administration, President Obama signaled his intention, despite the multi-agency model stressed in the mission statements of the TSCTP and AFRICOM, to continue the military approach to Africa begun by his predecessors George W. Bush and Bill Clinton. That year Obama called for increased funding for OFE-TS and TSCTP, both of which operated out of Stuttgart. He also increased funding for Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. Obama's budgetary request for the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) program for Africa was up over 300 percent from previous years, from $8.2 million to $25.5 million for 2009. The International Military Education and Training (IMET) program was boosted by 17 percent that year. IMET covers military training for foreign military personnel, much of it in America. Budgetary increases for FMF and IMET programs for Algeria and Morocco were even higher than for the rest of Africa. These increases in spending for military operations in North and West Africa, along with the Obama administration's apparent intent to maintain and expand AFRICOM, a project initiated by the G.W. Bush administration, clearly indicate Obama was sticking with the military approach to containing and combatting Islamist terrorism in the region.

Volman argues that Obama's policy in Africa is as "militaristic and unilateral" as that of his predecessor G.W Bush. He sees this military approach to counter-terrorism in Africa, like that of Bush and Clinton before him, as a "troubling approach based on might and dominance" that comes at the "expense of promoting sustainable development and democracy." Further, Volman argues, the civil aid thrust of US Africa policy has been weakened by lack of funding for Department of State and USAID projects, leaving military aid as the only viable option. This reliance on military aid runs the risk of tying the US to repressive regimes that are often unstable as well as undemocratic, such as those in Algeria and Nigeria. Therefore, despite President Obama's claim that military aid is in conjunction with non-military activity, comprehensive plans to address underlying issues such poverty and corruption are weak.[52] International relations scholar Yahia Zoubir critiques US securitization policies in the Maghreb and the Sahara-Sahel region, saying the focus of securitization is on "visible problems." In other words, Zoubir is arguing that US policy concentrates on epiphenomena, such as terrorism, human trafficking, illegal migration, and criminal networks, not on the underlying roots

51 Testimony: Hearing on Counterterrorism in Africa's Sahel Region. Washington, DC, November 17, 2009. US AFRICOM Public Affairs. African Affairs Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

52 Volman, 2009, p. 1; Volman, Daniel. (2010b) "Obama Should Rethink U.S. Military Expansion," *African Security Research Project (ASRP) Africa Report,* Number 22. April-May 2010, p. 3.

of these problems, which include poverty, underdevelopment, and joblessness.[53] Mark Davidheiser, an expert on conflict analysis and resolution, has criticized US reliance on the training of military units in African countries, given the record of US-trained military in units Africa and, historically, Latin America in "brutalities and human rights violations against the [domestic] populations." Given what happened in Mali in 2012 and 2013, it appears these criticisms have proven prophetic. State's Africa Secretary Jonnie Carson's words about supporting Malian "professional units capable of improving the security environment" now seem a mockery. The Malian military units trained by American SOF teams, including the 33rd Paras, proved far from professional, not to mention woefully lacking in capacity. Likewise, Defense's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa Theresa Whelan's comments about a "paradigm shift" calling for a "multi-agency" approach to failed states and structural dysfunction in governments ring similarly hollow. AFRICOM's programs were primarily military, relying little on and providing little funding for non-military programs. And the government that Mali's military served indeed failed and proved to be structurally dysfunctional.

Conclusion

As will become painfully apparent in the following chapters, the American securitization initiatives in the Sahara-Sahel zone, especially those programs targeting Mali, were a total failure in terms of their stated objectives. Northern Mali was completely overrun by terrorist organizations and organized criminal networks. The Malian army units trained by American SOF teams either defected to the Tuareg rebels or were defeated and forced to retreat, abandoning the materiel the US-led initiatives had paid for. The PSI and the TSCTP failed in Mali because corrupt officials, civilian and military, as well as local business interests that had long circumvented laws and jurisdictions they felt did not apply to them, did not want to deny access to the country to terrorists and/or traffickers so long as they felt they would share in the profits generated by contraband or illegal activities. These same initiatives failed in Algeria because they operated under the assumption that Algeria was a "partner" with the US in the struggle against terrorism and insurgency, as well as contraband and trafficking in the Sahara-Sahel zone. America defined a partner as sharing the same goals as the US in the region. Algeria's goals, however, were always regime survival and control over Saharan petroleum resources. Defeating terrorist organizations, establishing border security, and controlling trafficking in arms, drugs, and labor migrants were always secondary goals for Algeria. As a result, Algeria was double-dealing with its partner, as Pakistan has long been doing regarding US involvement in Afghanistan.

AFRICOM too has failed in Mali and in the broader Sahara-Sahel region because of its overemphasis on militarization and military solutions to what

53 Zoubir, 2009, p. 997.

are often political, economic, and social problems. AFRICOM, like the PSI and the TSCTP, focused on capacity building within Malian and other African militaries while overlooking the underlying problems of poverty, corruption, and underdevelopment. In particular, the securitization initiatives failed because they put all of the emphasis on terrorist groups and failed to take proper account of criminal networks and organized criminal activities.[54] Problems like these do not have a military solution. Neither Mali nor Algeria was committed to border security and interdiction of contraband while their economies relied on quasi-legal and illegal logistics and commodities. Algeria was not committed to helping Mali control its Tuareg and Bidan insurgencies so long as it felt these groups might help it gain access to as yet undiscovered petroleum and mineral wealth that may lie under the sands of northern Mali. Likewise, Algeria is not committed to controlling the issue of labor migration across the Sahara when it has historically been dependent on migrants from various parts of West Africa for the development of its southern regions. Similarly, the government of Mali, or rather its corrupt officials, was not committed to ending either the kidnappings for ransom or the smuggling of illegal commodities like cocaine, so long as it was able to count on a cut of the profits of these ventures. The following chapter will discuss regional destabilization in the period leading up to the Mali War of 2012–2013. It will focus on the Algeria-Mali borderlands and northern Nigeria.

54 Lacher, Wolfram. "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Paper. September 13, 2012, p. 2.

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Chapter 6
Regional Destabilization: Algeria/Mali and Northern Nigeria, 2010–2012

Introduction

In the run up to the Mali War of 2012–2013, the ongoing destabilization of the North and West Africa meta-region accelerated. This destabilization began to manifest itself in extreme versions of certain social and economic features that had been developing for some time. In particular, this chapter will discuss extreme versions of the contraband traffic that had long been an economic feature of the Sahara-Sahel zone, as well as extreme forms of Islam, which had also been slowly developing from Algeria to Nigeria over the past decades. Two sub-regions of the North and West Africa meta-region will be examined for the purposes of this discussion: the Algeria-Mali border regions, long a seat of contraband and smuggling, and northern Nigeria, which had been the locus of extremist forms of Islam, including violent outbursts, at least since the 1980s. In the Algeria-Mali borderlands, we will examine the rise of organized criminal networks that developed out of the widespread contraband traffic that had long flourished in the region. The cocaine trade, clearly an extreme version of the regional contraband traffic, became a critical component of this organized criminality. In the case of cocaine traffic, we are dealing with a commodity that is in and of itself illegal, as opposed to much of the regional contraband traffic in previous decades, which focused on the smuggling of what were for the most part otherwise legal commodities, such as foodstuffs, cigarettes, vehicles, and building materials.[1] Two factors had rendered the traffic in these otherwise legal commodities illegal. The first was the presence of artificial borders thrown up in colonial times and jealously maintained in the post-independence period by the national states that grew out of the former French colonies.[2] The second factor was the economic policies, including subsidies, in those national states that controlled prices on different sides of the borders, thus creating artificial price differentials that could be exploited by those willing to

1 Scheele, Judith and James McDougall. "Introduction" in James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 8.

2 Dillon, Karin. "The Touareg Rebellion: Causes, Consequences, and Prospects for Peace in Northern Mali." Unpublished MA Thesis, American University's School of International Service, 2007, p. 64.

flaunt the regulations and customs enforcement.[3] South American cocaine, on the other hand, was and is completely illegal in all the countries involved, not to mention virtually unknown, until recently, in North and West Africa.

In these same Algeria-Mali borderlands, we will see the appearance of extreme forms of Islam as well, in the form of violent jihadist-Salafist Islam, which was likewise new to the area. Radical Islam has a long history in northern Algeria, and violent Islamist insurgent groups had appeared with dramatic and pervasive effect there in the early 1990s. But it was not until the turn of the new millennium that these groups began to operate to any significant degree in the Saharan reaches of the country, including some spillover into Mali. Mali, on the other hand, had seen very little of radical Islam and even less violence related to radical Islamist movements. This relative absence of radical Islamism in Mali changed also in the early 2000s as foreign Islamist movements began to make inroads, especially in northern Mali, including the Saudi Wahhabiyya and the Pakistani Jama'at al-Tabligh, not to mention the Algerian GSPC/AQIM. These inroads continued and even expanded until the northern half of Mali found itself in the grips of violent extremist Islamist militias by mid-2012. We will also examine the extent to which these extreme forms of contraband and extreme versions of Islam are linked in Saharan and Sahelian reaches of Algeria and Mali.

Next, this chapter will discuss the evolution of the extreme Nigerian Islamic movement Boko Haram, already examined in Chapter 4. Nigeria has a long history of extremist and even violent Islamist movements dating back at least three decades. Boko Haram has proved neither the most extreme nor the most violent of these movements, but it has become perhaps the most persistent and most troubling of the Nigerian radical movements. Beginning in 2010, Boko Haram began to adopt new tactics, some of them seemingly borrowed from al-Qa'ida and new sets of targets, including international targets within Nigeria. And while Boko Haram remains essentially a national insurgency directed at the Nigerian government, there is at least some evidence of increasing links between it and Algeria's AQIM and its related Malian offshoots. These links have taken the form of the exchange of messages, ideas, tactics, and apparently at least some sharing of personnel and use of training facilities. Finally, this chapter will analyze the emergence of a splinter group of Boko Haram called Ansaru, which emerged in 2012 and which seems to be distinct from its parent group in at least two ways. First, its most noteworthy tactic seems to be kidnappings of foreign hostages for ransom, a practice that Boko Haram has not engaged in. Second is the group's internationalist outlook, in contrast to the decidedly nationalist focus of Boko Haram.

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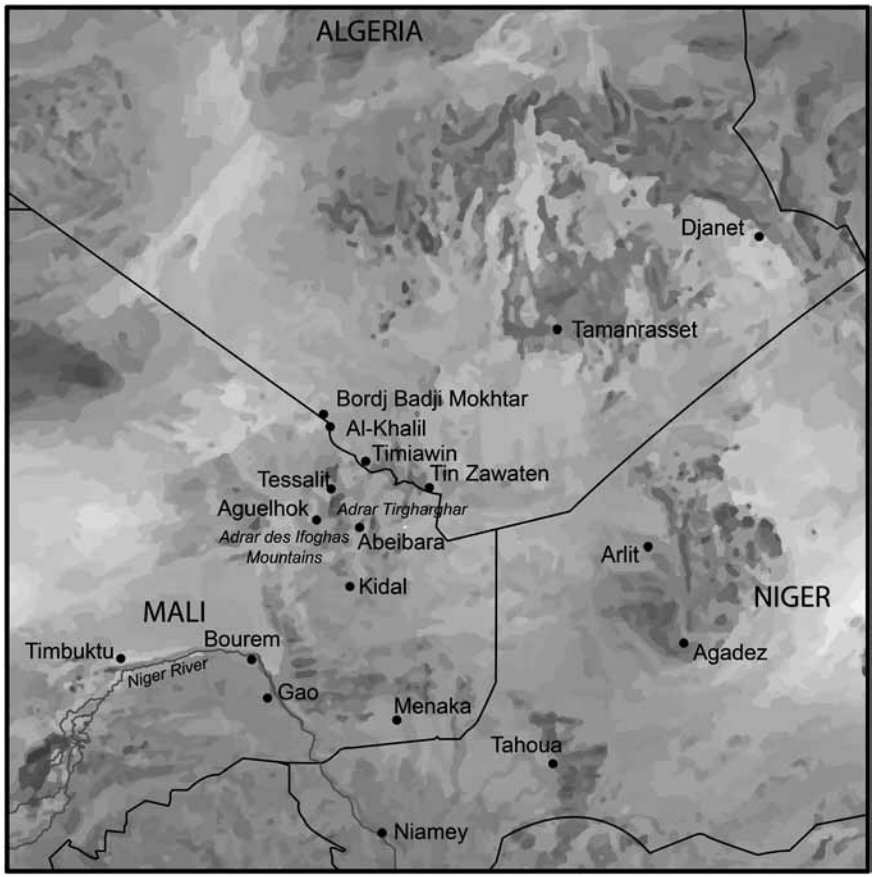
3 Brachet, Julien. "Movements of People and Goods: Local Impacts and Dynamics of Migration to and through the Central Sahara" in James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 252.

The Algeria-Mali Borderlands



Map 6.1 Algeria/Mali Borderlands
Credit: Max Rinkel

Extreme Contraband

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Tuareg and Bidan of the central Sahara historically regarded pastoralism and long distance trade, along with clerisy, as honorable occupations. After the droughts of the 1970s and 1980s, motor transport replaced pastoralism and transnational smuggling replaced caravan trade as new legitimate

occupations, at least in the eyes of these ethnic groups.[4] West Africa, especially Saharan and Sahelian West Africa, has ideal conditions for contraband trafficking, including porous borders, weak and corruptible institutions, and pre-existing criminal networks.[5] Smuggling in the Sahara derives from the trafficking from Algeria in government subsidized powdered milk and other foodstuffs during the so-called "*Lahda* period" in the early post-independence years. Typically, staples were shipped from Adrar or Tamanrasset to towns on the Malian border, such as Bordj Badi Mokhtar or Timiawin. The goods were then transferred to fast 4 x 4s to avoid border customs fees. Once across the border, they go to Kidal or Gao. The 4 x 4s are mustered in al-Khalil or Kidal. Refined gasoline, available at subsidized prices in Algeria, is another commodity smuggled across the Malian border. Export of refined gasoline is illegal in Algeria, but because of the price differential, it is one of the most important items of trade across the Algeria-Malian border.[6] As cuts in Algerian subsidy budgets appeared in the 1990s, causing a relative economic slump in the region, this illegal trade in otherwise legal commodities morphed into trade in cigarettes, weapons, and drugs, especially cocaine. Traffic in these goods has opened up unprecedented opportunities for social mobility.[7] As we saw in Chapter 2, the Arabic terminology used in Algeria reflects these nuances—the smuggling of otherwise legal goods, such as foodstuffs, is called *al-frud al-halal* (permitted contraband) and *al-frud al-haram* (forbidden contraband). As we will see, this illegal traffic evolved into even more extreme forms of contraband trade in the 2000s.

The smuggling of legal commodities from Algeria to Mali and other countries that did not enjoy such generous, petrodollar-supported subsidies was paralleled by the extra-legal importation of consumer goods, largely of Chinese provenance, from the ports of Mauritania through Timbuktu and on into Mali and other countries. This traffic was based on informal arrangements with customs officials, as on the Algerian border. As contraband trade in these otherwise legal commodities increasingly turned into the smuggling of cigarettes, weapons, and drugs, organized crime networks began to thrive in the Sahara-Sahel region, largely because there were few methods of legal enrichment available. Some observers have discussed the inherent difficulties of researching organized crime,

4 Lecocq, Baz. "The Bellah Question: Slave Emancipation, Race, and Social Categories in Late Twentieth-Century Northern Mali," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (CJAS), 39 (1), 2005, p. 56.

5 "Mali a 'wake-up call' for drug trafficking, says think tank." IRIN News. February 5, 2013, p. 2.

6 Scheele, Judith (2012a). *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 102, 105.

7 Lebovich, Andrew. "Mali's Bad Trip: Field notes from the West African drug trade," *Foreign Policy*. March 15, 2013, p. 1; Lacher, Wolfram. "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahara-Sahel Region." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Paper. September13, 2012, p. 3; Scheele, 2012a, p. 96.

including drug traffic. For one thing there is usually little evidence available. Therefore, as one scholar points out, the researcher must depend on "vague reports and local rumor." Key players can be identified, but evidence linking them to organized crime or to the Islamist militias such as AQIM and MUJAO is generally "circumstantial and speculative."[8] West Africa expert Wolfram Lacher, noting that accusations and rumors abound but little hard evidence is available, suggests a method involving "triangulation" of evidence from multiple sources from different political backgrounds and agendas. He says this triangulation is the best way to use such speculative evidence because it allows the researcher to be reasonably confident of his analysis.[9] With these caveats in mind, we will now attempt to flesh out a picture of organized crime activity in the Sahara-Sahel zone, with particular reference to the trafficked drugs, especially cocaine.

Cocaine Trafficking in the Sahara-Sahel Zone

Anthropologist Judith Scheele says organized crime networks are controlled by shadowy cartels called "mafias," the headquarters of which are far away, either in Algeria, Libya, or even Colombia, well beyond the reach of regional authorities. Local drivers and others employed by these mafias are often the younger brothers of "respectable" Algerian and Malian traders. Both Scheele and Lacher claim cocaine traffic in North and West Africa is controlled by such mafias.[10] The first transit of South America cocaine through West Africa began before 2000. At that time the cocaine was shipped to Europe by boat. Sometime later, smugglers switched to overland routes across the Sahara. The cocaine traffic has expanded greatly since 2003.[11] The drugs arrive at coastal ports from Morocco to Senegal and Guinea Bissau. From there the cargo makes its way to the Mediterranean coast countries, including Libya and Egypt, via desert routes, often crossing Mali. For example, cocaine comes by boat from South America to Nouadhibou on the Mauritanian coast, where it is picked up by drivers from the Tindouf camps in Algeria where Sahrawi refugees from the Western Sahara are sheltered. It is repackaged and handed over to drivers, mostly Tamasheq and Bidan, from al-Khalil in northern Mali. From al-Khalil the drugs are shipped through Niger and Chad, and finally to Egypt, Israel, and Eastern Europe. The ultimate destination is the big consumer market in Western Europe.[12] Alternate routes include by sea to Guinea-Bissau or by air to Lomé or Cotounou, or sometimes Bamako or Niamey. Drug routes are flexible and shift to different cities and different countries along with shifts in the security and political environments. The volume of the cocaine trade from South America via West Africa to Europe is believed to be substantial.

8 Lebovich, 2013, p. 2.
9 Lacher, 2012, p. 2.
10 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 117–24; Lacher, 2012, p. 1.
11 Lebovich, 2013, p. 1; Lacher, 2012, p. 3.
12 Scheele, 2012a, p. 115; Interview 116 (US Embassy official, American), Part 2.

Based on UN estimates, the total value of the traffic increased 60 fold between 2002 and 2007. Much of that expansion came between 2005 and 2007. The peak year was 2007, when, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), some 47 tons of cocaine transited West Africa.[13] The annual volume is believed to have declined by 2008 to around 20 tons, though that amount is still worth an estimated $1.25 billion, more than most regional defense budgets.[14] The traffic in drugs as well as in other commodities is linked to various ethnic and tribal groups in various parts of the Sahara. The trading/smuggling triangle of Algeria-Morocco-Mali is controlled by Sahrawi networks, often, reportedly, with the collusion of Popular (Front) for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO) officials.[15] The drug traffic in Mali is typically handled by traders from families of Mali's Arab (Bidan) minority. Malian Arabs from the Tilemsi Valley between Kidal and Gao are said to be dominant in the cocaine traffic of northern Mali.[16]

There is widespread belief both among the Malian public and among journalists and academics that AQIM, along with its allied militias Ansar Dine and MUJAO, is involved in the cocaine traffic. Several of the interview respondents claimed Ansar Dine and MUJAO were involved with or were protecting the cocaine traffic.[17] Lacher says MUJAO became a front for the cocaine traffic. The mayor of Gao, according to journalists Ellen Knickmeyer and Drew Hinshaw, even said Boko Haram militiamen came to Gao from Nigeria not for religion but for the cocaine traffic.[18] But direct evidence to support the level and the nature of this involvement is, not surprisingly, sketchy. Dr. Kwesi Aning of the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center in Ghana notes that while the cocaine trade in the Malian Sahara started with the Tuareg and Bidan, the volume of the cocaine trade increased once al-Qa'ida (GSPC) got involved around 2003 because that group had access to the smuggling networks of Algeria.[19] Other observers remark that the South American cartels wanted to expand their cocaine markets to Europe about the same time the GSPC was establishing itself in the Malian north near Gao, and that the advent of cocaine trafficking substantially augmented

13 Larémont, Ricardo René. (2011a) "Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Terrorism and Counterterrorism in the Sahel," *African Security*, 4 (4), 2011, p. 243; Lebovich, 2013, p. 3; Lacher, 2012, p. 4.

14 Knickmeyer, Ellen and Drew Hinshaw. "Upheaval in Mali Curbs Drug Traffic." *Wall Street Journal*. March 29, 2013 p. 2; Hirsch, Afua. (2013b) "Cocaine flows through Sahara as al-Qaida cashes in on lawlessness*," The Guardian*. May 2, 2013, p. 1.

15 Lacher, 2012, p. 4. POLISARIO is a liberation movement dedicated to freeing Western Sahara from Moroccan control.

16 Lebovich, Andrew. "Trying to Understand MUJWA," Wordpress Blog. August 22, 2012, p. 2; Knickmeyer and Hinshaw, 2013, p. 1.

17 Interview 104 (Government functionary in Timbuktu, displaced by occupation) Part 2; Interview 107 (Songhai merchant from Bourem) Parts 1, 2.

18 Interview 104, Part 2; Knickmeyer and Hinshaw, 2013, p. 2.

19 Interview 107, Part 2.

AQIM's ability to raise money.[20] However, the correlation between the appearance of GSPC/AQIM in the Malian Sahara around the time cocaine trafficking begins to increase in volume is an ad hoc argument. It does not prove a cause and effect relationship exists, nor does it inform on the nature of the connection between Islamist terrorist groups and cocaine smuggling—or other contraband activity, for that matter. Lacher says, "There is little evidence to support allegations of direct AQIM involvement in drug smuggling." Rather, he suggests, it is more likely AQIM and its affiliates charge smugglers with transit fees and protection fees.[21] He also argues that when Malian president Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT) gave the northern Malian Arab militias a green light to operate as armed vigilante groups, as discussed in Chapter 3, he was also agreeing to look the other way with regard to their smuggling activities, including cocaine smuggling. As to the connection between the radical Islamist militias and cocaine traffic, Lacher states succinctly, "Rivalries over control of smuggling and state officials' tolerance of criminal activity by political allies allowed extremist groups to flourish."[22] One of the interview respondents was a merchant from Bourem, near Gao, who seemed particularly knowledgeable about connections between business and commerce in the north and Malian government and military officials. He felt convinced certain powerful army generals, including some of those appointed by ATT, were profiting from the cocaine and other contraband traffic by looking the other way and not ordering their officers to clamp down on it.[23]

The widespread practice of smuggling, whether in otherwise licit commodities or in illicit commodities like cocaine, led to a situation where corruption became commonplace among officials, and corruption led to the collusion of officials with the contraband traffic. The customs services were first eroded by the smuggling of licit commodities. The resulting collusion between state officials and smugglers became pervasive in most regional countries, including Algeria, Libya, Mali, and Niger.[24] This problem of corruption and collusion was aggravated, as mentioned above, by ATT's decision to permit the formation of ethnic-based armed militias so they might balance against each other in terms of political and military power. Many of these ethnic-based militias, especially the Malian Arab militias, became heavily involved in contraband, including the cocaine traffic. ATT looked the other way in the face of this smuggling, and his indifference was interpreted as a green light by officials to collude with the traffickers. An International Crisis Group report of 2012 says cuts from drug money and ransom paid for the release of kidnapped hostages "lined the pockets of northern and Bamako elites, including

20 Hirsch, 2013b, p. 1; Knickmeyer and Hinshaw, 2013, p. 1; Larémont, 2011a, p. 243.

21 This is how the Colombian FARC started in the cocaine business.

22 Lacher, 2012, pp. 2, 5–6, 13.

23 Interview 107, Part 1.

24 Brachet, 2012, p. 250; Lacher, 2012, p. 4.

senior officials in the state administration."[25] A US Embassy official told me traffickers have influenced and corrupted many aspects of Mali's government, including the security forces. Cocaine traffickers effectively purchase the services of officials, including military officers, not only in Mali, but in Algeria as well, though Lacher points out collusion on the part of Algerian officials with smugglers is at the *wilaya* (provincial) level, not at the national level.[26]

What seems most likely to be the case, based on admittedly anecdotal and hearsay evidence from a variety of sources, is that neither fighters nor leaders of AQIM or its affiliated militias nor Malian government officials are actually smuggling the drugs. That task appears to be in the hands of ethnic Tamasheq and Bidan traders supported by young drivers and handled by urban merchants linked to the smugglers' families either by blood or by marriage. However, leaders of terrorist groups are earning their cut of the drug profits by protecting the routes and/or charging transit fees paid by the smugglers. Likewise, drug money flows into the hands of merchants who also operate legal business, and these merchants, often from Tamasheq or Bidan clans, pay bribes to officials who agree to look the other way, or donate cash to politicians and party leaders to support their election campaigns. The complete lack of transparency in election campaign financing (see Chapter 3) would easily permit cash donations of money tainted by drug payoffs. Gao, on the Niger bend, has become a major staging area for the cocaine trade. Andrew Lebovich, blogger and Sahara expert at the New America Foundation, says many Gao notables may be complicit with the cocaine traffic as part of a larger "mafia system."[27] Gao boasts a neighborhood called *Cocainebougou* (Cocaine Town), with many fine villas allegedly built by money made from cocaine smuggling. In the wake of the retreat of the Islamist militias from Gao in January and February of 2013, many of the Gao-based drug smugglers and facilitators abandoned these "palaces." Some of the supporters of the March 2012 coup against ATT cited cocaine trafficking, or complicity with it, on the part of their generals as a reason for the coup. Lebovich, however, believes the drug trade was linked to and protected by military leaders both before and after the coup, meaning some junta leaders may themselves be linked to cocaine traffickers. He also believes cocaine traffic continued under separatist (Islamist) rule, but that the routes had been disrupted, leading to the seeking out of new routes. The transitional government of Mali claimed in February of 2013 it was trying to "flush out" the cocaine traffickers from the security services, especially in the north. Government prosecutors charged six Gao area mayors with cocaine trafficking. Some of these mayors still remain at large, however. Local residents at Gao, blaming the general lawlessness and corruption of officials on the drug

25 International Crisis Group (ICG). "Mali: Avoiding Escalation," *Africa Report N°189*. July 18, 2012, pp. 7, 17.

26 Interview 116, Part 2.

27 Lebovich, 2012, p. 2

traffic, nearly lynched two alleged cocaine traffickers-*cum* businessmen, Baba Ould Cheikh and Mohammed Ould Awainati.[28]

One way drug profiteers may seek to avoid such repercussions is to "launder" or "moralize," to use Scheele's term, their drug moneys. This laundering may be done, as discussed in Chapter 2, by re-investing drug smuggling profits into livestock and/or wells in desert towns. Other ways of "moralizing" drug money include paying for religious educations for relatives or feeding poor relatives. Also common is using drug money to build mosques. Two mosques in al-Khalil on the Algerian border were built by notorious drug smugglers.[29] Another aspect of the emergence of extreme contraband trafficking in the Sahara, especially the cocaine traffic, is that the social relations associated with the traffic have been effected. Scheele points out that truck transport, like that used to smuggle otherwise legal commodities, *al-frūd al-halal*, also served to transport passengers, either in the bed on top of the cargo, or perhaps a woman might ride in the cab with bundles of goods and personal effects. In this manner the women of the trading families might visit relatives or business contacts, and news could be exchanged as they talked and gossiped with the drivers or other passengers and travelers at the way stations. The "slow and sociable" truck transport has given way to fast 4 x 4s with lone, taciturn drivers who transport cocaine but carry no passengers. But this *al-frūd al-haram* can easily provide sufficient funds for a "moral" lifestyle, once the money has been "moralized." Despite the emergence of *al-frūd al-haram*, the trade between Algeria and Mali is still mostly in low-value legal commodities such as pasta, semolina, powdered milk, refined gasoline, and building materials. These goods are consumed within the region and are regarded as necessary for local survival.[30]

The unincorporated, unchartered desert outpost of al-Khalil is emblematic of the extreme contraband traffic of which the cocaine trade is a part. Al-Khalil is a hub of illegal trade in the northern Malian desert north of Tessalit and just across the border from the known and mapped Algerian customs outpost of Bordj Badji Mokhtar. The first house in al-Khalil, according to Scheele, is said to have been built in 1993.

> Al-Khalil's rise was rapid, carrying within it the promise of an equally rapid decline, its population is stereotypically cosmopolitan; its very survival is dependent on its connections with the outside, as it produces nothing but trades in "everything." It proclaims itself "stateless," but thrives because it is located in the interstices of regional states. It is organized along close-knit networks that stretch far beyond its geographical boundaries, but that nonetheless regulate social interaction and individual status within it. Its fame is legendary throughout northern Mali and southern Algeria, where members of trading

28 Knickmeyer and Hinshaw, 2013, p. 2; Lebovich, 2013a, pp. 1–3.

29 Scheele, 2012a, p. 121; Lacher, 2012, p. 9.

30 Scheele, Judith and James McDougall, 2012, pp. 8, 13; Scheele, 2012a, pp. 95, 96.

> families never tire of debating the moral quandaries it brings up, rejecting it while also intimately relying on the revenue it generates.[31]

Today it features what are called *gawārij* (Arabic: garages), large Malian-style compounds that feature stronger mud brick or cement block walls and stronger metal gates than ordinary compounds.[32] Ordinary Malian urban compounds house extended families and double as places of business, whether it be women dying cloth or dressing and roasting meat, or men working on cars and trucks or on electronic components, or simply providing warehouse space for table vendors or small shops in front of or near the compound, or scattered across the town. Malian compounds that double as mechanics' shops are called *garage* (French: garage, mechanic shop). The *gawārij* of al-Khalil generally feature the requisite piles of used parts and tires, hulks of trucks and cars, and more-or-less operable vehicles being worked on because the owners service the trucks that carry the contraband, both the licit and the illicit varieties. Among the services provided in and about the *gawārij* of al-Khalil are car repairs, spare parts, currency exchange, credit facilities, information, and paperwork—false, of course, like so much of Mali's "official" documentation. Al-Khalil, as described by Scheele, is a node within various overlapping networks that manage and carry the regional traffic in goods of all kinds, including cocaine. Each *garāj* has its own network, including managers, drivers, money changers, mechanics, and armed guards, as well as professional smugglers, coming from a variety of countries besides Mali, including Algeria, Mauritania, and Libya. Many networks have their headquarters in al-Khalil.[33] Few women and children are found in al-Khalil, unlike the typical Malian compound that usually has both in abundance. The children who are there, according to Scheele, are adolescent boys who work as mechanics' apprentices or drivers in training. "Good" women and marriage-eligible girls are not found in al-Khalil. Most residents of al-Khalil maintain a proper residence in Tamanrasset or Adrar, or perhaps in Gao, where their wives and families live.[34] Al-Khalil is a place where money is earned that must be "laundered" or "moralized" elsewhere, for example, in the oasis towns of southern Algeria or the Niger bend towns of Mali. Most trade in al-Khalil, including both legal and illegal commodities, is organized by local networks. Trans-regional trade requires collaboration among different networks.[35] Al-Khalil is supported by numerous networks connected to

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31 Scheele, Judith (2012b). "Garage or Caravanserail: Saharan Connectivity in Al-Khalil, Northern Mali" in James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, p. 222.

32 Scheele, 2012a, p. 3.

33 Mouaki, Samira. "Tribes, Smugglers, Jihadis Roil Northern Mali Conflict," *El-Khabar* (Algeria). September 18 2012, p. 4; Scheele, 2012b, p. 224.

34 Scheele, 2012b, p. 226.

35 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 16–17.

the outside, for example, to respectable trading towns like Tamanrasset, Kidal, or Gao. The residents of al-Khalil are atomized; that is, they have no sense of community; their community is their outside network. In this regard, al-Khalil is no different from other Saharan settlements. Even in the face of electric water pumps and oil refineries, Saharan towns remain tied to outside sources of wealth, and regional connectivity, to again borrow Scheele's phrase, is still relevant.[36]

Algerian journalist Samira Mouaki says the closeness of the family links and the tribal bonds between al-Khalil and the across-the-border town of Bordj Badji Mokhtar make stopping smuggling impossible because it has too much local support. Even the border guards and customs officials often come from the same families as the drivers. While northern Mali was occupied by the Islamist militias, many Malian families fled to the border area to stay with relatives in Bordj Badji Mokhtar or Tamanrasset rather than in the refugee camps of Timiawin, another border settlement to the southeast. Many of these refugees go back and forth daily between al-Khalil and Bordj Badji Mokhtar, making control of smuggling unfeasible. Mouaki claims much of the weapons, food, and fuel used by the Islamist militiamen at Gao and Timbuktu passed through al-Khalil.[37]

If an examination of the smuggling outpost of al-Khalil reveals aspects of the shadowy world of extreme contraband, then a further glimpse can be afforded by a look at the notorious "Air-Cocaine" affair of 2009. In November of that year the charred wreckage of a Boeing 727 cargo jet was found in the Malian desert in Tarkint, a commune in the Tilemsi Valley between Gao and Kidal. The plane had crash-landed and could not take off again. It was carrying an estimated seven to 11 tons of cargo, believed to be largely cocaine. The plane, registered in Guinea Bissau, a known cocaine transit country, had taken off from Venezuela.[38] The cocaine on board was loaded on a convoy of 4 x 4s and taken for transit and sale. The mayor of the Commune of Tarkint, Baba Ould Cheikh, was implicated in the scandal.[39] Ould Cheikh, a close advisor and political ally of Malian president ATT, was subsequently arrested in April 2013, along with an associate, Mohammed Ould Awainati, in connection with the scandal.[40] These are the same two alleged cocaine traffickers who were nearly lynched by an angry mob at Gao after French intervention forces forced the retreat of the MUJAO leaders and their fighters from the city. The "Air Cocaine" incident is, of course, only the tip of the iceberg.

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36 Scheele, 2012a, p. 200.

37 Mouaki, 2012, p. 5.

38 Lacher, 2012, p. 5. For evidence linking Guinea Bissau, including some of its high-ranking military officers, with the trans-Atlantic cocaine traffic, see Adam Nossiter," U.S. Indicts Guinea-Bissau's Military Chief in Drug Case." *New York Times*. April 18, 2013.

39 Morgan, Andy. "The Causes of the Uprising in Northern Mali: The Tuareg rebels' recent attacks represent a fourth roll of the Kel Tamasheq dice." *Think Africa Press.* February 6, 2012, p. 7; Scheele, 2012a, p. 116.

40 Ahmed, Baba. "Mali mayor accused of drug trafficking arrested," Associated Press. April 11, 2013, p. 1; Lebovich, 2013, p. 1; ICG, 2012, p. 5.

Many other planeloads of cocaine, perhaps not all as large as a Boeing 727, made it through the desert to be met with convoys of 4 x 4s and young men to transfer the cargo. But it provides anecdotal proof of one of the major routes of transport and the style of logistics employed, as well as the political connections of people involved in the traffic as patrons and protectors. Most importantly, it illustrates the degree to which the region had become destabilized in the years leading up to the Malian War of 2012–13 and the role of extreme contraband traffic in that regional destabilization.

Human Trafficking in the Sahara-Sahel Zone

The Sahara has long been a venue of human trafficking. For much of the last millennium this trafficking was in the form of the trans-Saharan slave trade, known since classical times. This trade accelerated around the ninth century CE with the rise of the Arab Caliphate in North Africa and the Middle East heartlands. The first area of West Africa to be raided systematically for slaves was the grasslands area south of Lake Chad. The business of slave raiding and trafficking helped in the process of unifying the Kanem Empire around 1000 CE.[41] The slaves thus generated were trafficked into and across the Sahara as far as the Maghreb and Egypt. This process continued over the following centuries, but the areas being raided for slaves spread to the Western Soudan. The opening of the trans-Atlantic slave trade that supplied the plantation economy of the New World created a new outlet for this version of human trafficking, but the trans-Saharan slave trade nonetheless continued into modern times. As with other forms of trans-Saharan trade, the carriers of this human trade were the Tamasheq and Bidan of the central Sahara. When the great markets for slaves dried up in the New World and the Middle East in the nineteenth century, human trafficking in the Sahara continued in the form of the Tamasheq and Bidan enslavement of farming peoples along the Niger River. These captives were transported into the Sahara to do agricultural work and domestic service in the oasis towns. Called *bellah* by the Tamasheq and *haratin* by the Bidan, these slaves served their pastoralist masters throughout the Sahara and in the Sahel. This traffic obtained, of course, during the era of the trans-Saharan slave trade as well, as many of the slaves were trafficked to the Sahara rather than across it. As was discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, this traffic of slaves to the Sahara continued and even expanded under French rule and into the post-independence period.

The present-day trafficking of labor migrants is an outgrowth of this earlier traffic in slaves from the Niger bend to the Sahara and sometimes beyond. A significant difference between the slave trade of the pre-colonial and colonial eras and the labor migrant trafficking of today is that modern labor migrants are not captured in raids, but rather are forced by economic conditions to undertake the

41 Ehret, Christopher. *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002, p. 311.

arduous and dangerous trip across the desert to seek work either in the Saharan towns or in the cities of North Africa and sometimes Europe. The number of labor-seeking migrants from West Africa transiting the Sahara increased in the early 1990s, at which time an "integrated migration system" developed in the central Sahara.[42] Kel Tamasheq drivers and managers began supervising the routes and demanding payment, at times exorbitant, for transit and "protection" of the migrants. Where migrants had once made their own way, paying for transport on their own account, they were forced to pay traffickers for passage and security. The number of migrants increased dramatically after the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994, which affected not only Mali but several other regional countries in the CFA franc zone.[43] The Kel Tamasheq use trucks that carry about 20 people, though they often carry many more crowded one on top of another. These trucks are also generally loaded with grain or some commodity. The passengers sit on top of the payload, more often than not exposed to the sun. The drivers are often controlled and supported by AQIM in the transport of these undocumented workers. AQIM helps with protection and logistics and receives a share of the profits. I actually got a taste of this form of travel during my first research trip to Mali as, with my interpreter, I rode, exposed and crowded in, atop one of these grain trucks from Kayes to Nioro du Sahel, a two-day trip. At some point during day two I gave my interpreter a look that said, "Is this for real?" He responded saying that no foreigners, except possibly some of the missionaries, "know how we suffer."

The migrants come from many parts of West Africa, particularly Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria, some of the region's most populous countries, as well as from Central Africa.[44] They pass through Niger, Algeria, and Libya, some hoping to go all the way to Europe. Gao, Agadez, and Tamanrasset have become major migrant hubs. Some of the migrants try to get passage to Mediterranean cities like Tripoli, Algiers, and Bougie. From there they buy passage across the sea to Europe, with the most common countries of entry being France, Spain, Italy, and Malta. The passage from Gao to Tamanrasset typically costs about CFA 60,000 ($125). The leg from Tamanrasset to Bougie on the coast costs CFA 120,000 ($250).[45] In recent years, Kidal has become a hub for the traffic in migrant labor seekers, supporting a lively traffic in African migrants as well as in cocaine traffic and in commodities.[46] As was the case with the overland traffic of pilgrims

42 Brachet, 2012, p. 238; Lacher, 2012, p. 4.

43 Brachet, 2012, p. 244.

44 Larémont, Ricardo René. (2011b) "Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb" in Norman Cigar and Stephanie E. Kramer (eds), *Al-Qaida after Ten Years of War: A Global Perspective of Successes, Failures, and Prospects*. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2011, p. 143.

45 Larémont, 2011b, p. 143; Interview 107, Part 2.

46 Lecocq, Baz. *Disputed Desert: Decolonization, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali*. Leiden: Brill, 2010, pp. 375–7; Brachet, 2012, p. 255 n. 20.

to Mecca described in Chapter 3, the labor migrants trying to reach the Maghreb and Europe frequently need to stop and work along the way at the various stages. Most sub-Saharan nationals get stuck in the Sahara and find it difficult to make it all the way to the Mediterranean. Like consumer goods, most do not go all the way across the Sahara. Only a minority of the migrants intend to go to Europe.[47] At the various hubs they join up with communities of regional labor migrants and "white" refugees from Mali. They tend to congregate in "ghettoes," residential quarters of people of their same nationality. These ghettoes become "networks of solidarity" for migrants from the same country. There the migrants can find shelter and relative safety among other migrants who speak their language and share their culture. The migrants pay dues to a "president" of the ghetto, one of their countrymen who assumes a leadership role. The president can arrange transport to continue the journey. He is also the liaison with NGOs such as the Red Cross or the UNHCR. The payment of a lump sum purchases the right to stay and to receive help in case of illness or arrest by the authorities. In these ghettoes, which may consist of houses with courtyards that rent rooms or makeshift camps or shelters, the migrants may look for work to earn money to live on, sometimes for years, and, if possible, to continue their journey.[48]

A vast support industry for this tide of migration has appeared, especially in Niger, but also in southern Algeria. It includes restaurants, money changers, and telephone communication services, in addition to the ghettoes.[49] In Tamanrasset, a city that has no industry, whose economy rests on trade and tourism, including migration, there is a strong presence of Sahelian Africans as well as migrants from the cities of West and Central Africa.[50] Of those who never make it to Europe, Libya and Algeria were the most important countries where West Africans could find work. Libya was the most popular North African destination country because of its large GDP. But that situation changed with the fall of the Qadaffi regime in October of 2011.[51] The majority of labor migrants are young men seeking work either in the Saharan towns or in North Africa or Europe. Of those who do make it to Europe, many find work as street vendors in tourist destinations; others find menial jobs. Women also make the arduous journey, often lured by promises of legitimate work as domestics or cooks or waitresses. Many wind up being trafficked into the sex trade in European cities.[52]

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47 Brachet, 2012, pp. 238, 253.

48 Scheele, 2012a, pp. 202–4.

49 Brachet, 2012, p. 253.

50 Badi, Dida. "Cultural Interaction and the Artisanal Economy in Tamanrasset" in James McDougall and Judith Scheele (eds) *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012, pp. 201–2.

51 Larémont, 2011b, p. 144.

52 See Isabela Leao, "Trafficking in Women for The Purpose of Forced Prostitution: Italy's Article 18, Its Positive Effects in Victims and Its Role as a Model for Other European Union Countries." Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Pittsburg State University, 2005.

The dangerous nature of the passage across the Sahara was brought into stark focus with the discovery of the bodies of 92 migrants in northern Niger in October of 2013. The dead, mostly women and children, were found strewn across the desert near the Algerian border along the route from the mining town of Arlit in Niger to Tamanrasset. They came in two trucks from Kantche in southern Niger, some 700 km east of the capital Niamey. The passage across the Mediterranean Sea to countries of southern Europe is scarcely less dangerous. Some 500 African migrants are believed to have died in shipwrecks off the coast of southern Italy in October of 2013 alone.[53] The migrants are driven by poverty and hopelessness—Niger is ranked 186th by the UN on the Human Development Index.[54] The traffickers, mostly pastoral peoples, especially Kel Tamasheq, are also driven into the human trafficking business by poverty, having seen their herding lifestyle destroyed by the droughts of the 1970s and 80s.[55] They operate in networks, controlling the routes and extracting payment from the migrants like the notorious *coyotes* of the deserts of northern Mexico. A glimpse into the organization of this human traffic has been afforded due to a crackdown by the Nigerien authorities on the trafficking ring involved in transporting the ill-fated migrants. Some 30 arrests were made in connection with the tragedy, including the owner of the trucks and the driver of one of the trucks, who was accused of abandoning his passengers and leaving them to die. Also arrested were police officers accused of taking bribes to let the illegal convoy proceed, as were residents who put the luckless migrants up in their homes before the perilous journey began.[56] This list of detainees highlights how the trafficking networks are operated and maintained. Young drivers, typically Tamasheq or Bidan, operate the vehicles, while established traffickers/merchants own the trucks. Local residents assist with the logistics, and police and customs officials are paid off to look the other way. The similarities with the contraband traffic are readily apparent. And as is also the case with the contraband traffic, the extreme degree to which the trafficking of migrants has been pushed in recent years is indicative of the ongoing process of destabilization of the North and West Africa meta-region, especially its Saharan core. In the case of the human trafficking, both the trafficked and the traffickers are driven by poverty and lack of reasonable alternatives. They are abetted by ordinary residents who, also driven by necessity, are willing to take a cut of what is clearly an immoral, not to mention illegal, enterprise. And, finally, they are enabled by corruption and collusion among the very people whose responsibility it is to protect the victims of

53 Massalatchi, Abdoulaye, "Niger says 92 migrants found dead in Sahara after failed crossing," Reuters. October 31, 2013, p. 1–2.

54 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Index.

55 Le Vine, Victor. "Mali: Accommodation or Coexistence?" in William F.S. Miles (ed.) *Political Islam in West Africa: State-Society Relations Transformed.* London: Lynne Rienner, 2007, p. 93.

56 "Niger dismantles trafficking ring blamed for Sahara deaths," *Agence France-Presse*. November 17, 2013, p. 1.

the traffickers by enforcing regulations and blocking passage to the illegal, rickety trucks that carry so many people either to their deaths in the desert or the sea or to lives of exploitation and abuse in the countries of their dreams.

Extreme Islam in the Sahara-Sahel Zone

The rest of this chapter and much of the next will require some discussion of political Islam, or Islamism. As such, some clarification of these terms seems appropriate. William Miles defines Islamism as "organized activity … that strives to bring politics into line with Islamic principles."[57] Muhammad Ayoob uses the terms "political Islam" and "Islamism" interchangeably. He defines political Islam as "Islam as a political ideology rather than a religious or theological construct." [58] Peter Demant, paraphrasing Bassam Tibi, says that "Islamists eat modernity's fruits while trampling its roots." By this Demant means Islamists make use of modern technology and even certain modern ideologies, while denying the basis of modernity, reason.[59] Ayoob also addresses a form of political Islam that he calls neo-Wahhabism, which he says is influenced by the teachings of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's ideologue Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966). He says neo-Wahhabism combines Wahhabi social conservatism with Qutbist political radicalism, including anti-colonial and anti-Western doctrines, and leads to the militant variety of political Islam practiced by al-Qa'ida.[60] Al-Qa'ida and its franchises, including AQIM, are also considered Salafist organizations. Kepel says Salafism for militants means understanding the sacred texts, the Qur'an and the Hadith, in their most literal sense. Salafism, Kepel continues, derives from the writings of the fourteenth-century Syrian divine Ibn Taymiyya, a Hanbali jurist whose work also comprises the basic texts of Wahhabism.[61] Ibn Taymiyya cautioned against reason, which he regarded as a trap for heresy, and stressed the importance of scripture, especially Qur'an and Hadith, over flawed human reason. He also rejected the major works of Islamic scholarship that appeared after the Qur'an and Hadith, including the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, as *bid'a* (Arabic: innovation). Jihadist-Salafists combined this fundamentalist literalism with a commitment to jihad, with America as its chief target. Graham Fuller notes Salafists are highly intolerant of other branches of Islam that do not share their literalist interpretation, a quality they share with Ibn Taymiyya and

57 Miles, William F.S. "Islamism in West Africa: Introduction," *African Studies Review*, 47 (2), September 2004, p. 58.

58 Ayoob, Mohammed. "Political Islam: Image and Reality," *World Policy Journal*, 21 (3), Fall 2004, p. 1.

59 Demant, Peter R. *Islam vs. Islamism: The Dilemma of the Muslim World*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006, p. 223.

60 Ayoob, 2004, p. 4.

61 Kepel, Gilles. *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam*. Trans. Anthony F. Roberts. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 220.

neo-Wahhabism.[62] AQIM and its allied Islamist militias Ansar Dine and MUJAO are all Islamist, neo-Wahhabist, jihadist-Salafist organizations.

Prior to the arrival of GSPC/AQIM in Mali, the two vectors of radical Islam were the Malian Wahhabis and the Pakistani *dawa* (Arabic: call, preaching) organization Jama'at al-Tabligh, or Dawa al-Tabligh. The Wahhabis first appeared in Bamako in the late colonial period. With some Saudi financial support, they began to penetrate northern Mali in the early 2000s, opening some 16 Wahhabi mosques in Timbuktu alone, a city of 35,000, between 2000 and 2004.[63] The Wahhabis were Salafist, but not jihadist-Salafist. They preached against foreign influence as well as against "innovations" (*bid'a*) like the Sufi brotherhoods and saint veneration.[64] Tablighi preachers began teaching openly in Mali in the early 1990s, mostly in Bamako. The Tabligh is also Salafist, rejecting Malian Sufism and the Sufi texts such as Al-Hajj Umar Tall's popular and influential mid-nineteenth-century Tijaniyya text, *Al-Rimah* (*The Spears*). However, the Pakistani Dawa al-Tabligh was a proselytizing movement. It developed in India in the late nineteenth century where Muslims were a minority within a massive population of Hindus ruled by the Christian British. As such, they concentrated on teaching correct, if conservative, Islam so minority Muslims would not lose their identity. Starting in 1997–98, the Tablighi preachers began to concentrate their efforts in northern Mali, especially but not exclusively in the Région of Kidal. Within a few years, the Tabligh had won over elements of the local Tuareg leadership, including the maverick Iyad ag Ghali.[65] Kidal soon became a center of "bearded" Dawa proselytizers who were more radical than the local Malian imams and scholars. Two sons of Intallah ag Attaher, leader of the Ifoghas, took the Tablighi course, one of whom visited Pakistan for further study. Iyad ag Ghali also took the Tablighi course. The Malian government arrested a dozen or so "Pakistani" preachers in 2001, in the months after 9/11.[66] Tabligh preachers also appeared in Mauritania and Burkina beginning in the 1990s, where they preached radical Islamism and sought to influence Islamic teaching.[67] US Ambassador to Mali Vicki Huddleston expressed concern about Dawa preachers in northern Mali, saying life was becoming more conservative than before; for example,

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62 Fuller, Graham E. *The Future of Political Islam*. New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003, p. 48.

63 Anderson, Lisa. "Democracy, Islam share a home in Mali," *Chicago Tribune*. December 15, 2004, pp. 2, 4.

64 International Crisis Group (ICG). "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction," *Africa Report No. 92*, March 31, 2005, pp. 16–17.

65 Le Vine, Victor. "Mali: Accommodation or Coexistence?" William F.S. Miles (ed.) *Political Islam in West Africa: State-Society Relations Transformed*. London: Lynne Rienner, 2007. pp. 92–3; Morgan, 2012a, p. 8; Lecocq, 2010, p. 382.

66 Holzbaur, Christine. "Les inquiétants émirs du Sahel" *L'Express*. November 28, 2002, p. 1; Lecocq, 2010, pp. 382–4.

67 ICG Africa Report No. 92 2005:16; Smith, Craig, "US Training African Forces to Uproot Terrorists," *New York Times*. May 11, 2004, p. 2.

there were fewer girls in school than before the Pakistani preachers came. Lecocq agrees the Tabligh had some success in Kidal, including an impact on women's prerogatives.[68] Finally the Malian authorities expelled the Tablighi preachers "politely but firmly" from Kidal and Gao after they had gotten involved in political activity and election campaigns.[69]

Perhaps the best analysis of the Tablighi presence in northern Mali came from one of the interview respondents, an IT specialist originally from Gao. She said the Tabligh established itself in the religious centers of the north, including Gao, Kidal, Menaka, Nioro, and Nara, then spread west to Mauritania and east to Niger following the chain of Malian communities established by pilgrims along the routes to Mecca (see Chapter 1). She added that the strict form of Islam taught by the Tablighis was reinforced by social practices, including the covering and cloistering of women, learned by Malians who had resided in towns in Soudan and Saudi Arabia. The Tablighis encouraged such practices, she said. I mentioned that the Dawa al-Tabligh relies on proselytization, not on violence and intimidation, to spread its version of radical Islamism and asked how such violence became a feature of the radical Islamist militias occupying northern Mali in 2012. She said examples of the use of violence to spread religious teachings was already entrenched among the pastoral peoples of the Sahara-Sahel region. It had been learned from Algeria and Libya. The use of violent means to impose religious doctrine in the Sahara-Sahel zone was limited because of a lack of modern arms, but modern arms appeared on a grand scale after the fall of Qaddafi in 2011.[70]

The presence of radical forms of Islam in Mali, beginning in the late colonial period with the arrival of Wahhabism at Bamako and continuing into the 1990s and 2000s with the emergence of Dawa al-Tabligh in northern Mali, contrasted noticeably with Mali's tradition of moderate, tolerant forms of Islam. In pre-colonial Mali, the multi-ethnic state worked with the tradition of religious tolerance to cement the coexistence of different groups, each making their own economic contributions. This combination of religious tolerance and economic complementarity generated national cohesion and awareness.[71] Malian Islam was Sunni Islam with a tradition of Malikite law. Sufi brotherhoods, especially the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya, also had a long tradition in Mali. The Malian Wahhabis preached a more rigorous form of Islam based on Hanbali law, and, in particular, called for the veiling and cloistering of women. But their numbers were small, and they had little impact on the general tolerant spirit of Malian Islam. ATT famously praised Mali's tradition of tolerant Islam early in his presidency, saying, "What we have is an Islam that is very ancient, tolerant, and enlightened. We see nothing in our

68 Anderson, 2004, p. 6; Lecocq, 2010, p. 383.

69 Morgan, 2012a, p. 8

70 Interview 108 (Songhai woman from Gao) Part 1.

71 Grémont, Charles et al. *Les liens sociaux au Nord-Mali: Entre fleuve et dunes.* Paris: Karthala, 2004, p. 84.

religion that would prevent us from being democratic."[72] Malian Islam generally avoided strong political expression and did not promote an aggressive political agenda. During the lead up to regional elections in May of 2004, Abdramane Ben Essayouti, imam of the main mosque of Timbuktu, declared neutrality in the vote, saying Muslim leaders must remain impartial in politics. Even the more rigid Wahhabis publicly stressed Mali's tradition of secularity. Mahmoud Dicko, imam of the Wahhabi mosque in Bamako, said, "It is in everyone's interest for Mali to remain secular."[73] William Miles, writing in 2004 of not only Malian Islam, but of West African Islam in general, said the Islamist political initiative in West Africa still generally rejected wanton killing and destruction.[74] Italian journalist Sandro Magister, writing on Islam in West Africa in 2004, described Mali as an "oasis of religious peace."[75] It should be pointed out that such descriptions regarding Mali's religious tolerance and moderation by outside observers usually went along with statements by those same journalists and academics praising Mali's strongly rooted democratic institutions. As we saw in Chapter 3, Mali's famous democracy proved illusory and was undercut by corruption. Perhaps the high praise for Mali's religious toleration was also somewhat overblown, or missed underlying tendencies that might later undermine it. However, while Mali's supposed tradition of tolerant Islam may have been somewhat overstated, it is clear from the interviews as well as from my own personal experience that nothing like the extreme forms of Islam promoted by Ansar Dine and MUJAO had been known in Mali prior to 2012. The Malian Wahhabiyya and the Pakistani Tablighis had prepared the ground perhaps for sexual segregation and veiling and covering of women in public, but nowhere in Mali, not in the twentieth century at any rate, had there been amputations as criminal punishments and stoning of accused adulterers. The extreme aspects of the versions of jihadist-Salafist Islam promoted by the militias that occupied the north, along with the shock and revulsion they engendered in most ordinary Malian Muslims, will be discussed in some detail in Chapter 7. For now, we will examine the other vector of extreme radical Islam in Mali, AQIM.

AQIM's Kidnapping Reign of Terror in the Sahara

AQIM, a radical jihadist-Salafist Qa'ida affiliate, perpetrated the kidnapping for ransom of some 29 people, mostly Europeans between 2007 and 2011.[76] The capture of European hostages during this period raised significantly the profile of AQIM in general and of its southern Amir Abdelhamid Abou Zeid. Besides attracting world headlines, the hostage takings were a major factor in regional

72 Magister, Sandro. "Worldwide Islam Has and Oasis of Democracy: Mali," *Free Republic.* July 1, 2004, p. 2.

73 Magister, 2004, pp. 2, 3.

74 Miles, 2004, p. 58.

75 Magister, 2001, p. 1.

76 Larémont, 2011b, p. 147.

destabilization in the years leading up to the Mali War of 2012–2013. Abou Zeid, a.k.a. Abid Hammadou, commanded one of two AQIM cells that operated outside of Algeria. Shaykh Abou Zeid was a lieutenant of AQIM chief Amir Abdelmalik Drukdal during years of combat against the Algerian military. He also participated with Al-Para in the 2003 kidnapping of 32 European tourists in 2003. Abou Zeid began to eclipse Belmokhtar, the other southern amir of AQIM, who continued to concentrate on the cigarette and cocaine trade, while Abou Zeid focused directly on kidnapping, expanding his area of operations and abducting hostages in Tunisia and Niger.[77] He was personally linked to the kidnappings of more than 20 European hostages in the Sahelian countries since 2008 and was the leader of the cell that kidnapped and subsequently murdered British tourist Edwin Dyer in 2009 and French aid worker Michel Germaneau in 2010.[78] Unlike the cocaine traffic, AQIM directed and carried out the kidnappings itself, using the considerable ransom money extracted from the hostages' home countries to fund camps and training operations, including those in the Adagh des Ifoghas in the Kidal Région of Mali.[79] Abou Zeid's headquarters were in Tirgharghar in the Adrar as part of a larger AQIM stronghold. On July 22, 2010, French and Mauritanian troops mounted a joint raid on AQIM safe areas, hoping to free Germaneau. Using the Tessalit airfield as a staging area, the French force attacked the Qa'ida base partly on foot. Germaneau was not found, but seven of Abou Zeid's men were reported killed in the raid. Germaneau was subsequently executed in retaliation for the French-Mauritanian raid. Drukdal himself made the announcement of the execution on AQIM-controlled media. AQIM's quick response to the raid caused many observers to reevaluate their assessment of the group's level of organization and capability.[80] Abou Zeid's cell followed up with yet another hostage seizure on September 15, 2010. Five French citizens and two Africans were kidnapped from a French-run uranium mine in Arlit in northern Niger. A subsequent AQIM communique announced the capture of the Arlit hostages and praised Abou Zeid's role in the operation. He was referred to as "shaykh" and as the leader of a 100-man terrorist unit.[81] Further AQIM kidnappings of Europeans were carried out in in early 2011 in Niger and in southern Algeria.

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77 Cody, Edward. "'Emir of the south' Abu Zeid poised to take over al-Qaeda in NW Africa," *Washington Post*, October 20, 2010, p. 1; "Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, a harsh and violent leader within AQIM," *Ennahar Online English*. September 22, 2010, p. 1.

78 Keenan, Jeremy. "'Secret hand' in French Sahel raid," *Al-Jazeera Online*. August 29 2010, p. 1; Cody, 2010, p. 2; "Abdelhamid Abou Zeid …" 2010, p. 1.

79 Larémont, 2011b, p. 147; Lacher, 2012, p. 10

80 Szrom, Charlie. "The al Qaeda Threat from West Africa and the Maghreb: French Hostage Execution and Beyond," *Critical Threats*. August 2, 2010, p. 1; Cody, 2010, p. 1.

81 Guidere, Mathieu. "The Tribal Allegiance System within AQIM," West Point Combatting Terrorism Center. February 01, 2011, p. 1; Cody, 2010, p. 1; "Abdelhamid Abou Zeid …" 2010, p. 1.

AQIM's kidnappings of European hostages between 2007 and 2011 highlighted several important aspects of its presence in the Sahara, especially in northern Mali. For one thing, the group proved it was organized and coordinated, including keeping in contact with and presumably taking orders from headquarters in northeastern Algeria. For another, the kidnappings showed that AQIM and its southern commanders Abou Zeid and Belmokhtar were capable of operating in a number of Saharan and Sahelian countries, including Algeria, Tunisia, Mali, and Niger. Further, the kidnapping operations and the French-Mauritanian raid informed on the extent of the AQIM base in the Adagh, which was said to be fortified with caches of weapons and mines—an "impregnable fortress," according to a Malian officer who participated in a 2009 Malian raid on the facility.[82] In the wake of the Germaneau slaying, French President Nicolas Sarkozy promised the execution "will not go unpunished." Further, Prime Minister François Fillon declared France was "at war with al Qaeda."[83] But most importantly, the series of kidnappings and the minimally effective responses mounted by France, as well as by troops from Mauritania, Mali, and Niger, highlighted the level of destabilization to which the Saharan core of the North and West African meta-region had sunk by 2011. But however shocking and provocative the kidnappings were, the destabilization of the region at that time was only a prelude to the total breakdown of northern Mali that was to come in 2012. That breakdown will be the subject of Chapter 7. For now we will turn our attention to the destabilization at the other end of the meta-region, northern Nigeria, and the role of radical Islamist movements in it.

Northern Nigeria: Boko Haram Transformed

Qa'ida Tactics and Targets

Nigeria's Boko Haram qualifies as a terrorist organization in terms of its tactics and targets and also as an insurgency because its goal is to overthrow the government and establish a new, Islamic, state. And while Boko Haram remains essentially a Nigerian movement directed against the Nigerian government, it has international implications, partly because it spills over into neighboring Niger and Cameroon, and partly because Nigeria is so important regionally that destabilizing Nigeria has implications for the region as a whole. Further, according to sketchy but persistent evidence, Boko Haram may have established significant links with AQIM, and a few Boko Haram fighters may have served with the Islamist militias that occupied northern Mali for much of 2012. If such evidence is to be believed and Boko Haram has expanded into the Saharan core, then its role in destabilization in North and West Africa may be more important than previously believed. In this section we will examine Boko Haram's adoption of new Qa'ida-like tactics and targets, as

82 Szrom, 2010, p. 1.
83 Szrom, 2010, p. 1.

well as the evidence for actual linkage between Boko Haram and AQIM, such as oaths of allegiance and mutual training and/or sharing of tradecraft, up to actual participation by Boko Haram fighters in the armed occupation of northern Mali.

As we saw in Chapter 4, Boko Haram began to adopt new tactics and new choices of targets beginning in 2010. After Nigerian security forces raided the group's headquarters in Maiduguri in 2009, killing hundreds of adepts and the group's leader Mohammed Yusuf, it took the organization a while to recover. But eventually, after months of dormancy, Boko Haram regrouped under a new leader, Abubakr Shekau, and renewed its attacks in September of 2010, vowing revenge for Yusuf's death.[84] Since 2010, Boko Haram has killed hundreds of people, including nearly 800 in 2012 alone. Nigerian security forces have been unable to halt these attacks across northern and central Nigeria.[85] By mid-2011 it was becoming apparent the group had adopted new tactics and new choices of targets. In June of 2011 it bombed Nigeria's National Police headquarters in Abuja, leaving five dead. This attack was distinct from earlier ones in that it targeted a national institution in the capital, whereas prior to this attack, most incidents had occurred in northeast Nigeria, the base of the movement.[86] It was also distinct in that it was Nigeria's first known suicide bombing.[87] The police headquarters bombing was followed in August of 2011 with another suicide car bomb attack; this time the target was the United Nations offices in Abuja. This attack, which killed at least 23 people, marked Boko Haram's first attack on an international target and its second major attack in the capital.[88]

The attack on UN headquarters brought international recognition to the group, which had been hitherto little known outside of Nigeria. Further, the use of suicide car bombings and the selection of national and international targets caused observers to notice similarities with al-Qa'ida's tactics and choice of targets. Soon speculation was rampant that Boko Haram had established some connection with or had received training, or at least advice, from al-Qa'ida's regional franchise AQIM. Even before the UN bombing, AFRICOM commander Gen. Carter Ham had been claiming that "unnamed sources" had indicated there was a link of some kind between AQIM and Boko Haram.[89] Such speculation only increased when analysts noticed that on the same day as the bombing of the UN's Abuja offices,

84 Leigh, Karen. "Nigeria's Boko Haram: Al-Qaeda's New Friend in Africa?" *Time*. August 31, 2011, p. 2; Dixon, Robyn. "Nigeria militant group Boko Haram's attacks attract speculation." *Los Angeles Times*. September 13, 2011, p. 2.

85 Mazen, Maram and Lorenzo Tataro. "Kidnapped Foreign Nationals Killed in Nigeria, Diplomats Say." *Bloomberg*. March 10, 2013, p. 1; Gambrell, Jon (2013a), "Hostage killings a new, dangerous turn for Nigeria," AP. March 10, 2013, p. 1.

86 Leigh, 2011, p. 2.

87 "Blast rocks police headquarters in Nigeria," *Al-Jazeera*. June 16, 2011, p. 1.

88 Adigun, Bashir and Jon Gambrell. "Nigeria: 2 suspects arrested in UN HQ bombing," AP. August 31, 2011, p. 1.

89 Leigh, 2011, pp. 1, 2; Adigun and Gambrell, 2011, p. 1.

August 26, 2011, AQIM launched a suicide car bombing of a military academy in Cherchell, Algeria, some 100 km west of Algiers. That attack left 18 dead and 20 wounded. Given al-Qa'ida's known penchant for coordinated attacks on separate, symbolic targets, many began to wonder if the two attacks had been the result of such coordination.[90] Whether or not the bombings in Abuja and Cherchell were part of a coordinated joint action on the part of Boko Haram and AQIM remains a subject of debate, but it was clear the attacks in Abuja signaled a significant change in both the tactics used—suicide VBIEDs as opposed to machete and small arms attacks and motorcycle drive-by shootings—and the choice of targets—national and international targets in the capital, as opposed to local police stations and military bases in Nigeria's northeastern states. The question remaining was whether or not Boko Haram's changes in tactics and targets were due to links with AQIM.

Boko Haram-AQIM: Links across the Sahara?

Beginning in 2011, journalists began reporting that US officials were claiming growing links between Boko Haram and AQIM and even with the Somalian al-Shabab. One report claimed "recent American intelligence assessments" found that Boko Haram fighters trained with "Qaida-linked militants in the deserts of Mali," and that the group might seek to expand targets beyond Nigeria. Another quoted a "US intelligence source" as saying Boko Haram militants have trained with AQIM at camps in Mali and that UN offices bombing in Abuja could be attributed to AQIM influence on Boko Haram.[91] Besides reports from unnamed US intelligence sources, reports appeared to be emanating from Boko Haram itself, also suggesting links to AQIM. A Boko Haram spokesman identified only as "Musa" said in a 2010 interview with the *Los Angeles Times* that the group takes its ideological foundation from al-Qa'ida but does not receive funding or other support from it.[92] Another Boko Haram spokesman named Abu, who claimed responsibility for the UN bombing, also claimed Boko Haram has sought ties with AQIM and gave praise to al-Qa'ida. Boko Haram's new leader, Imam Abubakr Shekau, who took over as head of the movement in July of 2010, has praised al-Qa'ida and even offered condolences for Qa'ida losses in Iraq.[93] Still other suggestions that links may exist between Nigeria's Boko Haram and Algeria's AQIM come from AQIM leaders. In June of 2010, AQIM amir Drukdal, using his *nom de guerre* Abu Musab Abd al-Wadoud, told Al-Jazeera his group would provide support for

90 "Algeria suicide bomb attack hits military academy," *BBC News Africa.* August 28, 2011, p. 1; Mazzetti, Mark. "Al Qaeda Affiliates Growing Independent." *New York Times*. August 29, 2011, 2.

91 Smithson, S. "Al Qaeda link feared in U.N. building blast: Bombers likely trained in Mali terrorist camps." August 30, 2011, p. 1; Mazzetti, 2011, p. 3.

92 Dixon, 2011, p. 2.

93 Roggio, Bill. "Suicide bomber hits UN office in Nigerian capital." *The Long War Journal*. August 26, 2011, pp. 1, 2.

Boko Haram, including weapons and strategic depth.[94] AQIM media announced on October 2, 2010, that Boko Haram had pledged allegiance to AQIM; that is to say that Boko Haram leader Abubakr al-Shekau had pledged allegiance to AQIM Amir Drukdal. These oaths of allegiance, called *bay'at*, are part of a traditional allegiance system practiced by both AQIM and al-Qa'ida Central. They typically led up the chain of command to Osama bin Laden, until his death, to whom Drukdal had similarly pledged his allegiance. Drukdal's promise of aid to Boko Haram would be consistent with al-Shekau having pledged allegiance to him.[95] Journalist Elaine Ganley argues that by 2011 AQIM was trying to associate itself with the Arab Spring, presenting itself as an "alternative force" to the secular-nationalist military-dominated government of Algeria. As part of this campaign, she claims, AQIM stepped up its attacks on the Algerian government and Drukdal offered support to Boko Haram.[96]

One of the most persistent sources of reports on links between Boko Haram and AQIM turns out to be none other than AFRICOM commander Carter Ham. Gen. Ham said in an August 2011 interview that Boko Haram has said publicly it intends to "tether itself more closely" to both AQIM and al-Shabab. He added that both Boko Haram and AQIM have said they intend to coordinate efforts and attacks, and that such coordination would pose a threat to US interests across Africa.[97] Still other reports of terror links across the Sahara come from Nigerian sources. Nigerian media reported in the wake of the UN bombing that a man arrested in connection with that attack, one Mohammed Nur, had trained with AQIM camps in Mali, or possibly with al-Shabab fighters in Somalia. An Associated Press report of August 31, 2011, revealed the source for those media reports was Nigeria's State Security Service, the agency responsible for domestic intelligence.[98]

So what we have here seems to be not hard evidence for links between Boko Haram and AQIM, but a series of reports citing unnamed intelligence sources, reports that emanate from US and AFRICOM officials or Nigerian government sources, or from elements of both Boko Haram and AQIM. Interestingly, most of the sources and the agencies with whom they are identified are ones that might have an interest in such reports being believed. AFRICOM might like to raise the specter of a united terror front across North and West Africa because that would justify its mission and funding. Nigerian government sources might like to believe Boko Haram is getting outside support and advice because that would deflect from its own failure to stop Boko Haram attacks or to do something about the underlying conditions of poverty and corruption that seem to be driving poor Nigerians into the arms of extremist groups. The leadership of AQIM might like to

94 "Nigeria's Islamist killers a rising threat," UPI.com. November 10, 2011, p. 2.

95 Guidere, 2011, p. 2.

96 Ganley, Elaine. "Al-Qaida in North Africa seeks Arab Spring jihad." Paris: Associated Press. August 15, 2011, p. 1.

97 Mazzetti, 2011, p. 3; Smithson, 2011, p. 1.

98 Adigun and Gambrell, 2011, p. 1.

associate itself with Boko Haram, especially in the form of a supporting, paternal relationship, because then it could not only claim a share of credit for Boko attacks but, by portraying Boko Haram as part of the global jihad, it could validate its own jihadist-Salafist, anti-Western ideology. And elements of Boko Haram's leadership might like to cultivate the notion they are somehow linked to AQIM to broaden their own legitimacy and to suggest they are part of a larger Islamist struggle. So, the evidence for Boko Haram-AQIM links, at least as of 2011, seemed to be the product of some sort of echo chamber or feedback loop rather than convincing support for those links.

On the contrary, a number of journalists and analysts pointed out that, despite the concerns of certain US and Nigerian officials, the evidence for such trans-Saharan terror links remains inconclusive. Lebovich expressed caution regarding the evidence for such links, describing most of it as circumstantial, including the claims of officials, the sophistication of recent Boko Haram attacks, and similarities in rhetoric and tactics.[99] Journalist Robyn Dixon noted no hard evidence for a trans-Saharan terrorist network. She added that, with regard to the bombing of the Abuja UN offices, Boko Haram leaders claimed their motive was retaliation for the maltreatment of Boko detainees at the hands of Nigerian authorities. Leaving aside the fact it is unclear why Boko Haram would retaliate against Nigerian security forces by attacking UN offices, this statement contains none of the standard Qa'ida global jihad, anti-West rhetoric we associate with al-Qa'ida affiliates. Analyst Elaine Ganley concluded, "There is no sign of a formal AQIM partnership with Boko Haram." Others observers downplayed the idea of a pan-African jihadist movement, noting both AQIM and al-Shabab suffered reverses in 2011 and that Boko Haram remained a national terrorist movement focusing on Nigerian politics, not a battalion of the global jihad.[100] Prior to 2012, therefore, the evidence for AQIM-Boko Haram links was not entirely convincing. However, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. And, as we shall see in Chapter 7, the evidence for ideological links between the two groups and even for a limited Boko Haram presence in Gao and Timbuktu during the occupation of northern Mali by the Islamist militias is more convincing.

Ansaru: A Boko Haram Splinter Group

A splinter group called Ansaru split off from Boko Haram in January of 2012. It is distinguished from its parent group by its more internationalist outlook and its tendency to attack Western targets, primarily through kidnappings of Europeans, unlike Boko Haram, which does not do kidnappings, at least not of Europeans. The proper name of the splinter group is *Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladissudan*

99 Lebovich, Andrew. "On Boko Haram and AQIM." *al-Wasat.* August 20, 2011, p. 1.

100 Ganley, 2011, p. 1; Thurston, Alex. "Response to NYT Article on Boko Haram." *Sahel Blog,* August 19, 2011, p. 1; Dixon, 2011, p. 1.

(Group of Supporters of Islam in the Land of the Blacks).[101] Ansaru split from Boko Haram after it made attacks on Kano, a Muslim town in northern Nigeria. Ansaru denounced the killing of fellow Muslims and seems more internationalist in its focus and goals. While Boko Haram is a nationalist group, Ansaru is closer to AQIM in outlook and agenda.[102] Boko Haram statements in early March of 2013 seem to indicate "some factions are becoming more ideologically aligned with the international jihadists." Ansaru is one of those factions. This division of Boko Haram into nationalist and internationalist factions seems to mirror a similar split in GSPC/AQIM in the early 2000s (see Chapter 2).[103] Ansaru began kidnapping European hostages in March 0f 2012. But its most serious incident was nearly a year later in February 2013, when the splinter group abducted seven employees of Setraco Nigeria Ltd. The seven hostages, who were subsequently murdered without any ransom demands, were taken, according to a spokesman of the group, in revenge for French intervention in Mali. Ansaru is clearly expressing an internationalist outlook here, identifying itself with the broader jihad in the Sahara and expressing solidarity with the Islamists of northern Mali.[104] The seven murdered hostages included four Lebanese, one Briton, one Greek, and one Italian. The incident marked the worst kidnapping-related violence in Nigeria in decades. There has long been a pattern of kidnapping of foreign oil workers in the oil-producing Delta areas, but most of these hostages are ransomed. The Ansaru kidnappings are different in that it is not certain if obtaining ransom money is the goal. In any case, the internationalist credentials and objective of Ansaru are clear, while such motivations are far from clear with regards to the parent group Boko Haram.

Heavy-Handedness and Corruption: Failings of the Nigerian Security Forces

Perhaps the main reason why Nigerian security forces, police and military, have not been able to bring Boko Haram's violence under control is that nothing is being done to address the underlying conditions that create openings for extremist groups to operate and compete for popular support. These conditions include poverty, lack of jobs for school leavers, political instability, and corruption. Collectively, all of these underlying, long-term conditions are creating terrorists and insurgents faster than the security forces can defeat or eliminate them. Therefore, these underlying conditions are at the heart of regional destabilization in Nigeria and in other Sahara-Sahel nations. Two factors in particular bear on the problem of Boko Haram and its ability to attract and recruit disgruntled young Muslims. One

101 Matthew, Bey and Sim Tack. "The Rise of a New Nigerian Militant Group," *Stratfor, Security Weekly.* February 21, 2013, p. 1; Gambrell, 2013a, p. 2.

102 Mazen and Tataro, 2013, p. 1; Gambrell, 2013a, p. 2.

103 Lewis, David. "Insight: Islamist inroads in Mali may undo French war on al Qaeda," Reuters. March 13, 2013, p. 4; Gambrell, 2013a, p. 2.

104 Mazen and Tataro, 2013, p. 1; Gambrell, 2013a, p. 1.

is heavy-handedness and brutality on the part of the security forces, and the other is corruption among both civil and military officials.

Numerous observers, including US officials, have expressed concern over Nigeria's "shoot first" tactics, fearing they are doing more harm than good. Michael Woldemariam, an expert on African security studies, has said, "Military and police heavy-handedness in the north is core to the story of Boko Haram's emergence."[105] A Nigerian security regulation called Police Force Order 237 allows wide discretion in the use of lethal force. Police, for example, are allowed to shoot fleeing suspects. Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission estimates Nigerian police kill upwards of 2,500 Nigerians every year.[106] Nigeria's military has also come under sharp criticism for overreactions. After an army raid on a Boko Haram stronghold in Baga on the shores of Lake Chad on April 16, 2013, local reports indicated 180 people, including civilians, died and some 2,000 buildings were destroyed. The security forces claim only 37 people died. The Nigerian commander at Baga blamed Boko Haram rebels for the destruction and the civilian deaths, saying they used civilians as human shields and that rebel RPGs started the fires. Attempting to deflect criticism, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan promised any soldier found guilty of misconduct would be punished.[107] The US has urged Nigeria to prosecute abuses by federal troops against Boko suspects, fearing the army's tactics are driving "enraged locals" into the arms of the militants. But Nigerian troops are rarely prosecuted for abuses, which are said to include summary executions and spraying houses with bullets.[108]

An additional problem with regards to Nigeria's seeming inability to bring the insurgency under control has to do with corruption and lack of public trust in the government and the security forces. The US military, for example, is reluctant to share information with Nigerian authorities because it fears the information will be leaked to Boko Haram informants. The Nigerian government acknowledges that such informants have penetrated both the government and the security forces. President Jonathan has admitted Boko Haram moles are in all three branches of government, as well as in the army, federal police, and other security agencies.[109] In addition to penetration of government and law enforcement by informants, Nigeria also is infamous, if not legendary, for many other forms of corruption.

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105 Hinshaw, Drew and Adam Entous. "On Terror's New Front Line, Mistrust Blunts U.S. Strategy," *Wall Street Journal*. February 26, 2013, pp. 2, 3.

106 Hinshaw and Entous, 2013, p. 3.

107 Mshelizza, Ibrahim. "Nigeria pledges justice as pressure over killings grows." Reuters. May 1, 2013, p. 1; Hinshaw and Entous, 2013, p. 1.

108 Mshelizza, 2013, p. 1; Hinshaw and Entous, 2013, p. 4

109 Hinshaw and Entous, 2013, pp. 1, 3. This situation is reminiscent of the rocky relationship the US military and intelligence services has with Pakistan's military, especially its Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI).The US operations in Pakistan that have the best chance to succeed are the ones that are not discussed with the ISI, for example the 2010 raid on Abbottabad that resulted in the death of Osama bin Laden.

As in Mali, rumors and accusations of corruption extend to the highest levels of the administration. President Jonathan has been widely criticized for pardoning a former governor of the president's home state of Bayesla who had been convicted of corruption. Bayesla State is a newly formed state in the heart of the oil-rich Niger Delta region. Even when convictions for corruption are successful, they often result in soft sentences similar to those for ordinary robbery.[110] It is easy to imagine how such entrenched corruption could blunt government and military efforts to confront Boko Haram terrorists, just as the Malian government and military was unable to deal effectively with similar Islamist terrorists and nationalist insurgents on their territory, largely because of corruption.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the years leading up to the Mali War of 2012 to 2013 were characterized by destabilization and by the emergence of extreme versions of factors long present in the Sahara-Sahel region. In the Algeria-Mali borderlands we witnessed the emergence of extreme forms of commerce and contraband. Contraband had been in evidence for a long time, as had criminality in the central Sahara, but the period 2010 to 2012 saw petty smugglers replaced by organized criminal gangs called mafias, controlled from the outside and driven by demands that originated far beyond the region. Likewise we saw long accepted forms of contraband and the smuggling of goods across artificial economic and political barriers turn into a dangerous, as well as extremely lucrative, traffic in cocaine. This traffic was controlled by mafias and geared towards satisfying demands emanating from Europe, not Africa. Similarly, in the borderlands and in neighboring Niger we saw what had long been a steady stream of labor migrants turn into massive flow of trafficked humans also controlled by organized crime networks and also geared partly to labor demands in Europe. Furthermore, we saw the appearance of radical forms of Islam in areas where Islam had long been characterized by tolerance and accommodation. These radical strains of Islam were Salafist and, in some cases, jihadist-Salafist. The Arabian Wahhabiyya began to expand in the Région of Timbuktu, while the Pakistani Dawa al-Tabligh established roots in the Région of Kidal. The Wahhabiyya, as practiced in Mali, and the Dawa al-Tabligh were Salafist organizations, but not jihadist. As these groups were slowly attracting a following and radicalizing Islamic practice and society in the early 2000s, a jihadist-Salafist strain of Islam appeared in the Sahara coming from northern Algeria, namely the Qa'ida-linked AQIM. The Wahhabiyya and the Tablighis laid the foundation for Salafism and radical forms of gender relations and female seclusion hitherto little known in Mali. AQIM brought violent jihad into the mix, which merged with the secular-nationalist patterns of armed struggle to achieve self-determination long

110 "Nigeria president pardons ex-governor convicted of graft." Reuters. March 14, 2013, p. 1.

known to the Tamasheq. By mid-2012, violent jihadist-Salafism would break out all over northern Mali in the form of the AQIM-backed Islamist militias Ansar Dine and MUJAO. These movements will be examined in detail in Chapter 7. All of these factors—organized criminal networks and extreme drug smuggling, along with coercive forms of human trafficking, as well as the extreme and violent strains of Islam—contributed significantly to the destabilization of the region in the period 2010 to 2012.

In northern Nigeria we saw the transformation of Boko Haram, which had also been around since the beginning of the 2000s, into a bolder, more violent organization that had adopted tactics, if not goals, similar to the jihadist-Salafist movements in southern Algeria and Northern Mali. Boko Haram adopted suicide attacks and upgraded its targets from local police and military posts in the northeast of the country to national targets in the capital and even an international target, the offices of the United Nations. Despite the new tactics and new targets, Boko Haram nonetheless remained an essentially nationalist insurgency aimed primarily at toppling the national government of Nigeria and establishing an Islamist state. However, factions of Boko Haram began to adopt a more internationalist world view and to evince examples of the global jihad rhetoric associated with AQIM. One of these factions, Ansaru, turned to kidnapping foreigners, claiming to be acting out of internationalist motivations, including taking revenge on behalf of Ansar Dine and MUJAO for the French intervention in northern Mali. Finally we saw how Nigeria's tradition of extreme brutality and heavy-handedness in dealing with Boko Haram suspects and attacks, as well as the country's extreme levels of corruption works on one hand to drive people into the arms of the terrorists and on the other to blunt the effectiveness of the security forces in their efforts to stem the insurgency. In addition, the evolution of Boko Haram and the splitting off of Ansaru, along with the brutality and corruption of the regime, also went a long way towards destabilizing the Nigerian end of the meta-region.

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Chapter 7
Mali at War

Introduction

The Mali War of 2012–2013 could be called the fourth Tuareg rebellion against the Malian state. Indeed, it started out like yet another secular-nationalist Tuareg rebellion. But it was soon overtaken by events, including the unexpected coup d'état in March of 2012, followed by the expulsion of the Tuareg rebels from Timbuktu and Gao by the jihadist-Salafist militias Ansar Dine and MUJAO. The seemingly sudden appearance of the Islamist militias effectively marginalized the Tuareg rebels just as they were consolidating their control of the newly captured northern regions.[1] The extreme versions of contraband smuggling, human trafficking, and Islamic ideology that had been destabilizing the region (see Chapter 6) had morphed into total political and military collapse in the Malian Sahara. Mali's north comprises three Régions: Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal. The Tuareg and the Arabs represent a minority of the population of the north, and about 5 percent of the total population of Mali.[2] The largest ethnic group of the north is the Songhai, who live mainly along the Niger River. According to Mali's 2009 census, Tamasheq speakers account for about 32 percent of northern Mali's population, but these would include many *bellah*, historically the servants of the Tuareg and Arabs. The World Factbook says that the Tuaregs and Arabs together comprise 10 percent of Mali's total population of nearly 16,000,000.[3] Trouble with the Tuareg had been simmering since the last insurgency of 2006-2009, as warlord Ibrahim Bahanga raided army posts and took hostages for ransom, thus keeping the pot boiling.[4] This is to say nothing of the presence of AQIM terrorists in the Kidal Région since 2003. Besides the problem of the secular-nationalist insurgencies of the Tuareg and the jihadist-Salafist terrorism of AQIM, there also loomed the prospect of significant petroleum resources beneath the northern sands. The Saharan hydrocarbon sector has already proved transformative for Algeria

1 Morgan, Andrew. (2012a) "The Causes of the Uprising in Northern Mali." *Think Africa Press*. February 6, 2012, p. 2.

2 Dillon, Karin. "The Touareg Rebellion: Causes, Consequences, and Prospects for Peace in Northern Mali." Unpublished MA Thesis, American University's School of International Service, 2007, pp. 21–2.

3 CIA World Factbook. "Mali." Accessed February 27, 2014. The apparent discrepancies in these figures are likely due to the degree to which Tamasheq-speaking Bellah and Haratin are regarded as Tuaregs and/or Arabs.

4 Morgan, 2012a, p. 2.

and Libya. Some 95 percent of all exports from Algeria and Libya are crude oil or natural gas, accounting for 30 and 60 percent of the countries' GDP respectively. Presumed deposits in Mali and Mauritania are still being explored. In Mali, explorations are ongoing in the Taoudenit basin in the far north and the Graben field near Gao. If these fields come in as hoped, Mali may become the latest prize in what Baz Lecocq calls a "new scramble for Africa."[5] For now, however, there are few alternative sources of income in the Malian Sahara besides smuggling, whether the cargo be Algerian foodstuffs or South American narcotics.[6]

As for ordinary Malians, they seem to have their own analyses of the dangers presented by the twin threats of terror and insurgency on one hand and the promise of petroleum riches on the other. A popular perception among Malians is that a rivalry exists between the US, with its AFRICOM military presence, and France, with its history of Saharan occupation and its recent intervention force, over the presumed mineral wealth of northern Mali. And in this perhaps somewhat conspiratorial perception, China is in competition with both the US and France for this and other African resources, proven and unproven.[7] Many Malians blame the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) for causing the war itself. They believe the MNLA is not the legitimate spokesmen of the Tuareg, and further many believe it was in collusion with France. They accuse the MNLA of opening the door to the Islamists, allowing their seizure of the north.[8] France, for its part, appears to have at one time seriously considered the organization as a possible ally against AQIM, especially given the Malian government's seemingly passive attitude towards the Qa'ida-linked Islamist terrorists. France wanted its hostages back, and if the Malian government could or would not confront AQIM by force, perhaps, so the theory goes, the MNLA might.[9] As the insurgency got under way in early 2012, the Malian press began to use invective against the Tuareg rebels in general and the MNLA in particular, calling them armed bandits, drug traffickers, AQIM collaborators, and Qaddafi mercenaries. Such invective was also expressed by some of the interview respondents I consulted during my research in 2012.

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5 Lecocq, 2010, p. 376; Scheele, Judith. *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 7; Morgan, 2012a, p. 10.

6 Lacher, Wolfram. "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahara-Sahel Region." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Paper. September 13, 2012, p. 13; Lecocq, 2010, p. 376.

7 Interview 108 (Songhai woman from Gao), Part 1.

8 Dioura, Cheikh. "French battle Mali Islamists as Tuareg problem looms." Reuters. February 6, 2013, p. 1; Whitehouse, Bruce. "Understanding Mali's 'Tuareg Problem.'" *Bridges from Bamako.* Blog. February 25, 2013.

9 International Crisis Group, *Africa Report No. 189.* 2012, p. 11; Interview 106 (business woman from Gao), Part 2.

Terror and Insurgency in the North of Mali

MNLA

The MNLA was formed in October of 2011. It was a coalition of groups, some of which had already formed up in Mali, like the National Movement of Azawad, a precursor to the MNLA that had appeared in 2010. Other elements of the MNLA had come from Libya with "military power and expertise" under leaders like Mohammed ag Najim, who had lived in Libya since the 1970s.[10] The true mastermind of the MNLA was Ibrahim Bahanga, who had also come from Libyan exile, though he had only been in Libya since 2009. Bahanga, as discussed in Chapter 3, had been a leader of the 2006–2009 Tuareg rebellion against the Malian government. He developed a careful plan to renew the rebellion while in Libya and took steps to implement his plan when he returned to Mali in January of 2011, bringing veterans from his Northern Malian Tuareg Alliance for Change (ATNMC), one of the Tuareg splinter groups of 2007.[11] A number of my interview respondents mentioned that the Malian Tuaregs returning from Libya had come heavily armed and equipped with vehicles and even Russian 12.7 mm machine guns. They complained about how ATT had let the soldiers enter Mali from Algeria without confiscating their weapons, and even gave them aid, including money and commodities such as tea and sugar, and allowed them to settle in the area north of Kidal, near AQIM's stronghold. The sources said the returnees mixed with local Tuareg and encouraged them to join in a new rebellion against the Malian government.[12] One respondent, a business woman from Gao, suggested ATT had not tried to confiscate the refugees' arms because he did not want to risk a military confrontation late in his term.[13] Another interview, a group interview that included experts on both secular and Islamic law, claimed the MNLA formed up around the time that the "Libyans" returned to Mali and began demanding the independence of Azawad. They also mentioned alleged agreements between French President Nicolas Sarkozy and the MNLA, saying Sarkozy hoped the MNLA could confront AQIM and get back French hostages, the Malian government having failed to do so.[14] Meanwhile, Ibrahim Bahanga, who probably would have emerged as the leader of the MNLA, died in an alleged car crash in the desert in August of 2011.[15]

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10 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, pp. 7, 9, 11.

11 Morgan, 2012a, pp. 2, 7.

12 Interview 111 (Group Interview, family of legal scholars), Part 1, Interview 104 (Government functionary in Timbuktu, displaced by occupation), Part 1; Interview 106, Part 1.

13 Interview 106, Part 1.

14 Interview 111, Part 1. The source added that that this deal ultimately backfired badly against both Sarkozy and MNLA.

15 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 9; Morgan, 2012a, p. 2. Some of the interview respondents suggested that Bahanga's death was not an accident, that he was assassinated

The death of Bahanga provided an opening for the quixotic Iyad ag Ghali, whom freelance journalist Andrew Morgan calls "rebel in chief and high-level fixer."[16] As the arrival of refugees and the arms buildup continued, the rebel leaders held meetings at Zakak and at Abeibara in the Adagh hills in October of 2011. Ag Ghali hoped to be chosen as secretary general of MNLA and also wanted to become *amenokal* of the Ifoghas confederacy, but he was rebuffed in both of these goals. Instead, Bilal ag Cherif, a cousin of Bahanga, was named secretary general of MNLA and Alghabass ag Intallah was chosen *amenokal*. Ag Ghali was rejected because of his checkered career, which had caused many Tuareg to mistrust him, and also because of his association with the Salafist ideology of the Pakistani Jama'at al-Tabligh. Ag Ghali had been exposed to Tablighi teachings in Kidal in the early 2000s and had even traveled to Tabligh headquarters in Raiwind in Pakistan to study. Ag Ghali's "fundamentalist project" was rejected by most Tuareg because it conflicted with the liberal ethos of the *ishumar* exiles and with the traditional role of women in Tuareg society.[17] In any case, the MNLA was formed in October 2011. It was the most unified and best armed of any of the Tuareg and Arab rebel movements. Its armaments came from three main sources: arms that were brought from Libya, arms captured from the Malian army, and arms brought by defecting Malian army soldiers of Tuareg origin. Its political leader was Alghabass ag Intallah, son of the centenarian Intallah ag Attaher, and its military leader was Bilal ag Cherif. The MNLA even had an intellectual and public relations wing focused on diplomacy and geopolitical affairs, not fighting, a novelty for the Tuareg rebel movements.[18] The rebellion was set to begin.

The first attack against Malian army forces by the newly formed MNLA came on January 17, 2012, at Menaka, east of Gao, the same place where the 1990 rebellion had started. Soon the attacks spread to Tessalit and Aguelhoc in the far north.[19] The fighting at Aguelhok, in which the Ansar Dine also participated, resulted in the singular atrocity of the conflict. On or before January 24, upwards of 80 Malian soldiers were killed in cold blood, their hands tied behind their backs and their throats slit.[20] This incident, called "the most tragic episode of the war,"[21] caused outrage and deep resentment on the part of ordinary Malians against the MNLA, as was clear from my interview respondents, who often cited it as a reason why Mali should not negotiate with the group. The battle for Tessalit, with its airstrip, was more strategic, however. Tessalit was captured by MNLA rebels

(Interview 114 [Government official who has toured the north of Mali]), but Morgan believes that it is likely that it was an untimely accident, not an assassination.

16 Morgan, 2012a, p. 8.

17 IGC Report No. 189, 2012, p. 12; Morgan, 2012a, p. 8.

18 Morgan, 2012a, pp. 2–6; ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 10; Interview 114.

19 Interview 106, Part 1; Morgan, 2012a, p. 1.

20 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, pp. 14–15; Diakité, M. February 20, 2013; Interview 110 (Former student organizer from Macina, resides in Bamako), Part 3.

21 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 14.

on March 10–11 after a siege of some weeks. By that time, Menaka, Aguelhok, Léré, and Tin Zaoutene were already in MNLA hands.[22] One of my interview respondents, a displaced young father from Gao, described the beginning of the rebellion and the battles for Tessalit and Gao at some length.

> American troops were training Malian troops at Marshash, near Gao. The Americans warned the Malians trouble was coming. The Americans had information Islamists were infiltrating Mali and Tuaregs were returning from Libya. The Malian soldiers did not heed the warning by the American trainers that trouble was coming. Three months after the American trainers left came the first attacks at Menaka and Aguelhok. Before the fighting began, the MNLA, Ansar Dine, and MUJAO all worked together. Iyad ag Ghali was in charge. Many MNLA were deserters from the [Malian] army, including colonels. It was clear from the first battles at Aguelhoc and Menaka that Islamists were involved, not only the [secular-nationalist] MNLA. In January of 2012 the rebels surrounded the town [Tessalit] and the Malian army base. They laid siege for three months. When the rebels saw American aircraft dropping supplies, they knew the Malian troops were in a bad way. Some Malian troops fled Tessalit for Kidal and then to Algeria. Civilians fled from Kidal and Menaka to Gao. They thought the rebels would never take Gao. But the troops in Gao fled after hearing about the coup in Bamako. The first [rebel] contingent came [to Gao] in three vehicles. They seized control of the route to the army base. Then over 400 vehicles full of armed men arrived. They took control of all of Gao. The Malian troops in the area all fled. Some resistance was put up by the National Guard, but it was ineffective. They also fled. The attackers looted banks and shops, even small *boutiques*. They looted, among other things, motorcycles. They took all the weapons and vehicles abandoned by the army and the National Guard.[23]

This testimony supports the view that the Islamist militias worked in tandem with the MNLA at first, a claim supported by other interview respondents.[24] Other sources also confirm the rapid collapse of Mali's military in the north, leaving civilians exposed to abuses, including the settling of scores, rapes, recruitment of young boys, as well as allowing the capture of weapons in quantity. At Timbuktu and at Tessalit, for example, MNLA fighters seized armored vehicles and anti-aircraft guns from the army.[25] Another interview respondent who, along with his family, was displaced from Timbuktu by the insurgency, described a similar scene

22 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 13; *"Mali: le camp militaire d'Amachach est tombé," Maliactu.* March 11, 2012, p. 1.

23 Interview 113 (Displaced young father from Gao staying with friend in Bamako), Part 1. The term *boutigi* in Bambara, from the French, *boutique*, means a small store that sells canned foods and household goods.

24 Interview 114.

25 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, pp. 10, 15.

at that city. "The MNLA took Timbuktu from the Malian army, whose troops had fled. They destroyed government infrastructure, computers, offices, and records." As he was a government employee, he was forced to flee with his wife and children and a few personal effects, "leaving behind the work of 17 years." He said although the Malian army had control of the north, the troops were mainly Tuareg, many of whom deserted. He added that much of the MNLA was composed of Malian soldiers who deserted the army. He told me the MNLA captured and destroyed most of the arms and vehicles provided to Mali by the PSI and the TSCTP so the army could not use them.[26] Another interview respondent said the Malian army collapsed so precipitously because its presence in the north had been weakened by the accords of 1992 and 2006. The Malian government had made concessions to the Tuareg to try to accommodate the rebels, including offering ministerial posts in the government and high ranking positions in the army, along with significant materiel, as well as both military and development aid. She said the Tuareg used this materiel and power to attack the army.[27] I found this analysis to be consistent with a view expressed among not only the interview respondents, but among Malians in general. The analysis, however, stands in contrast to the typical Tuareg view of themselves as a deprived and underserved minority, a view common in northern Mali and in the Tuareg diaspora.[28]

As we have seen, the Mali War of 2012–13 started out like a renewal of the Tuareg-led independence struggle that goes back to the early post-colonial period, if not before. They struck with a secular-nationalist agenda and a goal of liberation of territory from Malian rule. Some initial presence of the Islamist militias is indicated at the start of the rebellion, but it did not appear to be significant. Early successful attacks at Menaka, Tessalit, and the massacre at Aguelhok caused much of the Malian government presence in the north to flee. When the March 22 military coup in Bamako triggered a mass flight of the Malian military, the rebels advanced even faster, capturing the three northern capitals, Kidal, Gao, and Timbuktu. As bad as things looked at this point, they were about to get much worse. In the next section we will discuss the sudden ascendancy of the Islamist militias Ansar Dine and MUJAO.

AQIM and the Islamist Militias, Ansar Dine and MUJAO

As discussed in Chapter 6, GSPC/AQIM's use of bases and sanctuaries in Mali dates from the seizure of the 32 European hostages in 2003. Many of these hostages were held in Mali until their release. AQIM continued to hold hostages in Mali, even though the victims were usually taken in other countries such as Niger. AQIM fighters made alliances, including marriage alliances with local clans, and they continued to rely on these alliances for protection and support at least until

26 Interview 104, Part 1.
27 Interview 108, Part 1.
28 See Hall, 2010, p. passim and Lecocq, 2012, p. passim.

January of 2013.[29] Historian Pierre Boilley says Salafists coming from Algeria "have chosen remote areas where for 20 years they have started cohabiting with the desert tribes based on business relations, threats, and family ties."[30] AQIM established strong links, including marriage ties, in the Timétrine hills west of Kidal where the Berabiche Arabs maintain wells, pasture for herds, and small gardens. In this same manner, AQIM has expanded into the Sahara-Sahel region, aligning itself with local clans and sinking deep roots.[31] From Timétrine and other bases established in the Région of Kidal, AQIM began acting like a state, collecting taxes, dispensing justice, and attacking police and government institutions as it had been doing in northeastern Algeria since the late 1990s. Abou Zeid's group Katibat al-Fatahin, for example, operated from a base near Tessalit.[32] The Malian government failed to prevent AQIM expansion into its territory partly because Mali reduced its military presence in the north because of the 2006 agreement, while at the same time AQIM was becoming more wealthy and powerful because of ransom money and drug trafficking. Mali had tolerated traffic in hostages on its territory since 2003 and did little or nothing to stop it. Therefore, because ATT did not push back against the Islamists, they came in force to Mali.[33] Having established strongholds and safe havens in Mali, as well a means of support from ransom payments and trafficking, AQIM was able to lend its support to Ansar Dine and MUJAO when they also began to operate in Mali. As we will see, the Islamist militias, with logistical and material support from AQIM and with some local support based on marriage alliances and recruitment of local youths, were able to, after seemingly coming out of nowhere, turn the tables on their one-time rebel associates the MNLA and take control of the northern cities themselves.

Ansar Dine

The exact origins of Ansar Dine (Arabic: Supporters of the Faith) remain somewhat murky. Correspondent Wolfram Lacher believes that ag Ghali formed Ansar Dine in January 2012 after he was rebuffed by the Tuareg returnees and the Ifoghas in his bids to become either MNLA secretary general or *amenokal* of the Ifoghas or

29 Callimachi, Rukmini. (2013a) "Al-Qaida carves out own country in Mali." Associated Press. January 14, 2013, p. 3.

30 *"Le sanctuaire quasi-imprenable d'Aqmi dans le Nord du Mali," Jeune Afrique*. September 21, 2010, p. 2.

31 *"Le sanctuaire quasi-imprenable d'Aqmi ... "* p. 2; McGregor, Andrew (2013a). "The Mobile Threat: Multiple Battlefields Ensure Instability in the Sahel/Sahara Region." Aberfoyle International Security. June 14, 2013.

32 Larémont, Ricardo René. (2011b) "Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb." Norman Cigar and Stephanie E. Kramer (eds), *Al-Qaida after Ten Years of War: A Global Perspective of Successes, Failures, and Prospects.* Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2011, pp. 133, 135–6.

33 Interview 108, Part 2; Interview 107 (Songhai merchant from Bourem, residing in Bamako Maiga), Part 2.

both. Morgan supports this version but says it was after the election at Abeibara where ag Ghali lost his bid to become leader of the Ifoghas.[34] The International Crisis Group (ICG) reports that ag Ghali, after his rejection at the Zakak meeting, formed a military unit by recruiting about 40 fighters from an AQIM *katiba* (Arabic: cell, brigade). The group then fell in behind the ranks of MNLA as the rebellion began. After fighting at Tessalit, Ansar Dine advanced south, growing in strength partly because of logistic support from AQIM and partly by recruiting from MNLA fighters for pay.[35] All these accounts agree that Iyad ag Ghali was the founder and leader of Ansar Dine. As mentioned above, ag Ghali had had a checkered career as a negotiator and intermediary between the Malian government and Tuareg rebels as far back as 1990. He also served posts for the government, including ambassador to Saudi, until he was expelled in 2010 for becoming involved in religious affairs. Ag Ghali's exposure to radical Islamic ideology came from his study with the Tablighi preachers and also perhaps through studying with Wahhabi sheikhs in Saudi during his diplomatic posting.[36] Another Ansar Dine leader was Oumar Ould Hamaha, a Malian Arab born in the Timbuktu Région of northern Mali. He was influenced by Islamist teachers in Algeria in the 1980s and joined AQIM in 2008, becoming a confidant of AQIM amir Mokhtar Belmokhtar. He served first as Ansar Dine's security chief in Gao before becoming the group's military chief for Timbuktu, where he supervised the notorious destruction of the shrines of Sufi sheikhs. Hamaha is one of several Malians who were long-standing members of AQIM before emerging in the leadership of Ansar Dine. His multiple roles also highlight the porous nature of the boundaries among the terrorist organizations.[37] Politically and militarily, Ansar Dine seems to have been more closely linked to AQIM than the other Islamist militia MUJAO. Lacher says that Ansar Dine took orders from AQIM, while MUJAO acted more independently.[38] In any case, Ansar Dine became established at Timbuktu, especially after the expulsion of MNLA, and remained in control there until a few months before the French-led intervention in January of 2013. More will be said about Ansar Dine's program and agenda in the upcoming section on the occupation of northern Mali by the Islamist militias.

MUJAO

The MUJAO emerged as a distinct group in late 2011 as an AQIM branch or splinter group. It first surfaced in October of 2011, claiming the abduction of two Spaniards taken at Tindouf in the far western corner of the Algerian Sahara

34 Lacher, 2012, p. 10; Morgan, 2012a, p. 8.

35 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, pp. 16–17.

36 Diakité, M. February 20, 2013.

37 Cavendish, Julius. "Destroying Timbuktu: The Jihadist Who Inspires the Demolition of the Shrines." *Time.* July 10, 2012, p. 1.

38 Lacher, 2012, p. 9.

where Sahrawi (from Western Sahara) refugee camps are located. The English language name of the group is the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa. The acronym derives from the French name of the movement. The key word here is "oneness," which in French is usually translated as "*unicité*." It is a reference to the unique and solitary nature of God, a fundamental concept within Islam, the Arabic word for which is *tawhid*.[39] All Muslims must accept the uniqueness of God and understand that only God is divine and supernatural; however, Salafists and other extremist Muslims take a particularly rigid stance on *tawhid*. It was precisely because of the need to demonstrate their strong take on *tawhid* that the Wahhabis destroyed the tombs of the Prophet and some of his companions at the ancient cemetery in Medina in 1804, to the shock and dismay of the mainstream Muslim world.[40] The destruction of the Banmiyan Buddhas by the Taliban and the desecration of the tombs of Sufi saints at Timbuktu by Ansar Dine are manifestations of this extreme stance on *tawhid*. A Muslim group or movement that has the word *tawhid* in its name is usually signaling its extreme Salafist ideology, which typically includes anti-Christian, anti-Sufi, anti-Shi'a, and anti-Zionist positions. For example, the hostility of radical Islamist movements in West Africa to Sufi practices such as saint veneration and mysticism is a function of their extreme stance on the concept of *tawhid*. The term jihad, of course, signals that the group is willing to resort to violence to achieve its goals.

The ICG says MUJAO, or MOJWA, was a splinter of AQIM composed of Saharan, not Algerian fighters. The split "apparently" developed, ICG says, over quarrels concerning ransom moneys paid for kidnapped hostages, adding that the group may have had its own bases in Mali since 2008, not long after the wave of kidnappings picked up.[41] Lebovich says MUJAO first appeared in December 2011, characterized as a splinter or "dissident" faction of AQIM. He also notes widespread speculation that MUJAO's income came from cocaine trafficking and kidnapping, and that their religious mission was primarily a front for their criminal activities. Lacher supports this view, saying MUJAO emerged as a group of hard-core activists, but it gradually became a front for smuggling networks. He adds that the core of MUJAO was composed of Malian Arabs, but after July 2012 they began to recruit more widely.[42] An interview respondent, the displaced father from Gao, supported this ethnic composition of MUJAO, saying the group has many Malians, especially from the north, but there are also foreigners, including Nigerians (Hausa), Burkinabe, Algerians, and Mauritanians.[43] Another interview respondent, a Malian government official who had made extensive tours

39 Lacher, 2012, pp. 2, 10.

40 Allen, Charles. *God's Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad.* Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2006, p. 64.

41 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 16.

42 Lebovich, Andrew. "Trying to Understand MUJWA," Wordpress Blog. August 22, 2012. Last consulted November 26, 2013, p. 1; Lacher, 2012, p. 10.

43 Interview 113,Part 1.

of the north, claimed the majority of MUJAO was foreigners, saying some were Nigerians from Boko Haram and some were deserters from the Chadian army who were rebels in Chad. The Chadians were, he claimed, the heavy weapons experts of MUJAO.[44] Yet another respondent, a Gao merchant, claimed MUJAO was mostly Algerians and Mauritanians.[45] These discrepancies could be due to the fact that different interview respondents were describing MUJAO at different times or were describing different units within MUJAO.

By late June the relationship between MNLA and MUJAO had broken down, and the Islamists soon expelled the MNLA fighters from Gao. The interview sources likewise give slightly differing accounts of this turn of events. The young father who had been displaced from Gao but who had witnessed the initial entry of the rebels into the city and the subsequent breakdown of the alliance of the secular-nationalist MNLA and the Islamist, jihadist-Salafist MUJAO gave this account.

> It was the MNLA that did much of the looting. MUJAO told the MNLA fighters to stop looting stores and homes. They [MUJAO] posed as protectors of the people. The people at first welcomed the MUJAO as protectors, protecting them from the MNLA. Some fighting broke out between the MNLA and MUJAO. It was after this fighting that the MUJAO expelled the MNLA. The MUJAO expelled the MNLA from Gao. They did this despite the fact that MNLA and MJUAO appeared to be working together at first. The MUJAO appeared more disciplined than the MNLA at first. But then they [MUJAO] began the amputations that offended the people. These things were done to make the people afraid. Helicopters came from Burkina to evacuate the MNLA fighters. Qataris arrived with trucks of food and commodities as aid for the people. But the people didn't see this aid. Medicines were also sent by the Qataris. The trucks arrived from Burkina paid for by the Qataris. The Qataris [who came with the trucks] were [Qatari] government officials. Some Algerian aid also arrived. The aid was given to the Islamists to distribute. The chaotic situation in Gao was somewhat stabilized by the arrival of aid and the control established by the Islamists. MUJAO formed a police force to patrol the city. Water was turned on in the mornings and evenings, electricity in the evenings.[46]

A US embassy official told me, "The jihadists and traffickers [MUJAO] eventually said they didn't need the Tuareg rebels anymore, that they, the traffickers, would control the cities. Then they started imposing shariah."[47] The Malian government official who had made extensive tours of the north gave still another account:

44 Interview 114.
45 Interview 107, Part 2.
46 Interview 113, Part 2.
47 Interview 116 (US Embassy official, Malian).

> MNLA started the rebellion. MNLA asked MUJAO to help them. MUJAO had bases across West Africa: Chad, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, especially Mauritania. MNLA did not have an Islamic agenda. They robbed, looted, and raped the people. MUJAO turned on MNLA because the people complained about the abuses of MNLA. MUJAO fought MNLA near Gao. Many MNLA fighters were killed, buried in mass graves, some of which are a few kilometers from Gao in the desert. The rest were driven from Mali. They [MNLA] fled to Burkina. The MNLA spokesmen fled to France.[48]

Malika Groga-Bada, a reporter for *Jeune Afrique*, gave yet another account, saying the conflict between the separatist Tuaregs and MUJAO broke down into fighting on June 27, 2012, in Gao. The MNLA fighters were chased out of Gao. Many young Gaois, Fulbe, and Songhai sided with the jihadists. The loss of Gao, by far the largest city of the north, Groga-Bada said, was a severe blow to the MNLA. The group also evacuated Timbuktu, Menaka, and Kidal on June 28. It attempted to regroup in the desert to plan its next move.[49] Lebovich adds that MUJAO got help from AQIM, led by Belmokhtar, to expel MNLA from Gao.[50] Other interview respondents supported the view that MUJAO was funded and armed by Qatar, among others. Qatari financial support for MUJAO is unproven, and, except for some humanitarian aid apparently delivered at Gao, it remains within the realm of hearsay. One respondent said AQIM furnished arms for MUJAO and supervised its drug trafficking. Another said Qatar helped finance the rebellion, supporting first MNLA and then MUJAO because of interest in Mali's anticipated hydrocarbon deposits. Still another, the business woman displaced from Gao, added that, after MNLA was driven from Gao, the group fled to Burkina, Mauritania, and France. It had had bases in Mauritania and Burkina, but its leadership was in France.

> The MNLA received some support from Qatar and other Gulf states. It also had the arms brought from Libya and the skills learned in fighting Qadaffi's wars. The Islamists supported the MNLA at first. But MNLA conducted *razias* [Arabic: raids] against the people [of Gao]. The Islamists said such raids were theft. They split from the MNLA. After the Islamists split from MNLA, they managed to garner the Qatari aid for themselves. They also received arms from AQMI. The Islamists managed with financial support from Qatar and logistics provided from AQIM. This is how they expelled the MNLA from the cities.[51]

Despite disagreements over details, these accounts agree that MNLA and MUJAO came to Gao together, but that they fell out with each other, and that MUJAO

48 Interview 114.

49 Groga-Bada, Malika. "Nord-Mali : comment le MNLA a été chassé de Gao." *Jeune Afrique*. July 4, 2012, p. 1.

50 Lebovich, 2012, p. 2.

51 Interview 106, Part 1.

expelled MNLA from Gao after some internecine fighting around the end of June. It was not long after this when the MNLA was similarly expelled from Menaka, Timbuktu, and even Kidal, near its home base, implying some degree of coordination among the Islamist militias, and, notably, some support and perhaps oversight on the part of AQIM. The accounts also suggest MUJAO initially gained some popular support in Gao because, compared to the excesses of MNLA, they seemed more disciplined and orderly and because they were able to bring in aid supplied by, among others, Qatar and Algeria. However, as we will see, any popular support MUJAO may have gained in the initial stages of its occupation soon turned to fear and terror as it began to impose its version of shariah, including amputations of limbs of thieves and other harsh punishments and restrictions.

Belmokhtar

The mention of Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the one-eyed smuggler and long-time AQIM amir, as having led AQIM's effort to help MUJAO expel MNLA from Gao is interesting. It could indicate that Belmokhtar was AQIM's liaison with MUJAO and possibly with Ansar Dine as well. Like other AQIM leaders, Belmokhtar had solidified his ties in the Sahara by marrying into a Malian Arab family, specifically, the daughter of a Malian Arab noble.[52] Journalist Rukmini Callimachi says Belmokhtar was also married to Omar Ould Hamaha's niece.[53] Hamaha, described as Balmokhtar's lieutenant, was an Ansar Dine leader who served both in Gao and in Timbuktu during the occupation. Many residents of Gao reported seeing Belmokhtar in the city during the occupation.[54] Belmokhtar had formed the Katibat al-Shuhada (Martyrs Brigade) in Ghardaïa as early as 1993, when he was with the GIA. Ghardaïa, his hometown, was on the main highway linking Algeria's Saharan south with Algiers, an artery for smugglers. From here he began extending his smuggling networks southward, eventually into northern Mali. Belmokhtar subsequently formed the Katibat al-Mulathamim (Veiled Brigade), from *litham*, the turban and facial veil worn by Tuareg men, which operated in Mali in the Région of Timbuktu, and in Algeria in Bordj Badji Mokhtar, Tamanrasset, and Djanet.[55] He was first seen around Tessalit as early as 1996.[56]

52 Knickmeyer, Ellen and Drew Hinshaw. "Upheaval in Mali Curbs Drug Traffic." *Wall Street Journal.* March 29, 2013, p. 1.

53 Callimachi, 2013a, p. 3. Larémont says Belmokhtar married four women from prominent Tuareg and Arab (Bérabiche) families, thus expanding his access to Malian commercial networks (2011b, p. 136).

54 Callimachi, 2013a, p. 2.

55 Larémont, 2011b, p. 136.

56 Hirsch, Afua. (2013a) "Tessalit assumes vital importance in Mali's struggle against Islamist rebels." *Guardian Africa Network.* February 4, 2013, p. 2.

Analyst Jon Marks of Chatham House says that Belmokhtar "mixes criminality with theology," depending on circumstances.[57] Thus described, Belmokhtar and his followers are an ideal example of a "hybrid" group, as discussed in Chapter 2. Peter Beaumont of the *Guardian* says Belmokhtar started out with the Algerian GIA and was a co-founder of the GSPC who then spread his activities to the Sahara, confirming his long-time AQIM credentials. Beaumont adds that AQIM chief-amir Abdelmalik Drukdal removed Belmokhtar from the leadership of the "Turbaned Ones," his Katibat al-Mulathamim, because he had become a "loose cannon." Belmokhtar later went on to form a splinter group called "Signers in Blood," (al-Muwakun Bi Dima) the group that later raided the Algerian natural gas facility at In Amenas in January of 2013, bringing him international fame.[58] The ICG reports Belmokhtar served as an intermediary in the arms transfers from Libya to Mali later used by MNLA to start the insurgency. These transfers began in early 2011, and included, reportedly, some 600 vehicles containing, among other weapons, AK-47s and Russian-made 12.7 mm machine guns. Later, the report says, Belmokhtar was one of the AQIM leaders consulted by ag Ghali just after Ansar Dine succeeded in expelling MNLA from Timbuktu, and that Belmokhtar was "well-established" in the Timbuktu Région.[59] Belmokhtar's credentials as a smuggler and a jihadist and AQIM brigade leader, as well as his established position in the Région of Timbuktu, would have made him the ideal go-between linking AQIM and the Islamist militias. Mokhtar Belmokhtar remains an enigmatic figure. Despite his long record as a smuggler, he at times seems constrained to portray himself as a first and foremost a committed jihadist, for example in his role in the seizure of the Algerian natural gas in January of 2013, which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

The Military Coup in Bamako, March 22, 2012

Causes of the Coup

Mali's military coup, led by junior officers against President Touré (ATT), a former coup maker himself, has been described by a Malian journalist as a "spectacular own-goal, emboldening the rebels to take further ground." Soccer metaphor aside, the description seems apt—a blundering move that benefits the other side. Regardless of proximate causes and stated pretexts—"Officers behind last week's coup accused the government of giving them inadequate resources to

57 Layton, Josh. "Algerian gas plant siege mastermind 'killed by Chadian forces in Mali.'" *The Observer.* March 2, 2013, p. 2.

58 Beaumont, Peter. "Mr. Marlboro: the jihadist back from the 'dead' to launch Algerian gas field raid," *The Guardian.* January 17, 2013, pp. 1–2; Layton, 2013, p. 2.

59 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, pp. 9, 16.

fight the rebels" [60]—the long-term causes of the coup probably had more to do with chronic state fragility. Coup leader Capt. Amadou Sanogo, indeed, mentions the "need to reform the state" in one of his first interviews after the coup.[61] State fragility in Mali was manifested in, among other ways, endemic corruption and even, reportedly, collusion with traffickers and kidnappers by government and military officials. The ICG claims the coup revealed just how fragile the Malian state was. For example, its report points out that Mali's procedural democracy, while having created a stable multi-party system with regular elections and an admirably free press, had failed to consolidate state institutions such as ministerial administrations, military intelligence services, police, gendarmerie, and state agencies and enterprises.[62] In Chapter 3, I referred to this failure as "illusory democracy." The army, for example, according to a US Embassy staffer, was "completely hollowed out, without a proper chain of command and with divisions among the different branches of the service." He added that ineffective government had been aggravated by corruption, leaving it powerless, and that young Tuareg, supplied with arms from collapsing Libya, had been allowed to capture towns.[63]

Lebovich points out that certain opposition leaders in the north, like Iyad ag Ghali, manipulated state power, posing alternately as a peace maker, a diplomat, and a hostage negotiator before ultimately betraying the state he pretended to serve. The maneuverings of ag Ghali and other northern manipulators, he says, weakened state institutions and fostered corruption. ATT contributed to this situation, he adds, by making concessions to "northern intermediaries," letting them form part of government agencies and letting them command militias in order to maintain order.[64] Malaise had simmered within the army since at least 2009, as rumors of "dangerous liaisons" between high-ranking political and military leaders with drug and hostage traffickers persisted. Junior officers were angry, in particular, with the promotion of numerous ATT cronies to the rank of general, the number of general officers more than doubling in two years, in a blatant example of favoritism.[65] As ICG's Africa Program director Comfort Ero put it, "Corruption and poor governance are more important causes of the crisis than the terrorist threat, the Tuareg issue, or even the north-south divide."[66]

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60 Dioura, Cheikh and Adama Diarra. "Mali Rebels Assault Gao, Northern Garrison." Reuters. March 31, 2012, p. 1.

61 Youtoube, March 22, 2012. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frvhWhcX_-s&feature=related).

62 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 20.

63 Interview 116.

64 Lebovich, Andrew. (2013a) "Mali's Bad Trip: Field notes from the West African drug trade," *Foreign Policy.* March 15, 2013, p. 3.

65 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 18.

66 International Crisis Group. "Mali: Security, Dialogue and Meaningful Reform." Africa Report No. 201. April 11, 2013, p. 1.

Perhaps more serious even than the problem of corruption was the problem of collusion between Malian authorities, civil and military, and drug and hostage traffickers, including AQIM. Lacher says state-criminal collusion is widespread in the Sahara-Sahel region, but it comes into sharp relief in Mali.[67] The governments of both Algeria and Mauritania have shown frustration with what they believe was Malian government collusion with AQIM, especially concerning the group's known practice of trafficking in kidnap victims on Malian soil. Algeria has accused Mali of deliberately using a weak hand against AQIM, saying Malian leaders believed AQIM could keep the Tuaregs rebels occupied.[68] Such a policy would be consistent with what we know of ATT's use of ethnic militias to balance against each other in an attempt to keep the north stable.[69] An Algerian diplomat voiced such concerns to US State Department officials, as revealed in a leaked 2010 diplomatic cable. And Mauritania, for its part, has expressed similar concerns, saying Malians may have tipped off AQIM about a planned joint action in the Wagadu Forest near the Mauritanian border in June of 2011.[70] In September of 2010, according to Lacher, the Mauritanian defense minister demanded that a Malian army officer be prosecuted because he was suspected of having tipped off AQIM of a Mauritanian attack on Malian territory. The operation had resulted in several Mauritanian casualties. Lacher adds that the Mauritanian army continued to engage in operations against AQIM cells on Malian territory after this incident but with minimal consultation with Malian officials.[71] Morgan suggests a few possible motives why Mali's leaders under ATT may have tolerated AQIM's presence in their country for so long: 1) AQIM could weaken the Tuareg rebels; 2) AQIM could put Mali out in front in the GWOT, thus bringing in aid from the TSCTP; 3) AQIM's presence in the north had cleared out the foreign journalists who were now fearful of being taken hostage themselves; 4) AQIM's presence would weaken Tuareg economy and society.[72]

When I asked my interview respondents why the Malian people had not protested more vigorously when their democracy was overthrown, several of them cited disillusionment on the part of the common people with the government and the political class. One said ATT lost the faith of the people because he did not tell them the truth about the rebellion, and because he let the Malian Tuaregs who were fleeing the collapse of Qadaffi's regime in Libya enter Mali with their weapons. Another cited popular disillusionment with the National Assembly because it had

67 Lacher, 2012, p. 12.

68 Morgan, 2012a, p. 9.

69 Vliet, Martin van. "The Challenges of Retaking Northern Mali." Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point. November 28, 2012.

70 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, pp. 5–6. See wikileaks.org/cable/2010/02/10BAMAKO99.html.

71 Lacher, 2012, p. 9.

72 Morgan, 2012a, p. 9.

failed to demand the rights of (*révendiquer*) the people.[73] Longtime Mali observer Bruce Whitehouse claims ATT's power had eroded to the point that, by the time of the coup, he had no legitimacy left. Further, he adds, the weakness of the army was exposed by the Aguelhoc massacre of January 24, 2012, one week after the start of the rebellion. ATT was confronted by brazen street demonstrations and delegations of soldiers' widows demanding an explanation, a sure sign of his weakness and vulnerability to a coup.[74]

The Coup Makers Strike

The coup began as an army mutiny by junior officers at the barracks at Kati, outside of Bamako, on the morning of March 21, 2012. By the end of the day the mutiny had turned into a coup d'état.[75] Malians got their first clear information about the coup from a speech made on ORTM (Malian state television) on the morning of March 22 announcing that a newly formed National Committee for the Reestablishment of Democracy and Restoration of the State (CNRDRE), under the direction of Capt. Amadou Sanogo, had taken power at key points around Bamako, including the Presidential Palace at Koulouba and, of course, the broadcast facilities of ORTM the previous evening. Malian army senior officers, generals and colonels, had fled in the face of Sanogo's rabble-rousing, allowing him to capture Koulouba.[76] ATT fled with the other senior officers as the mutineers attacked, reportedly making his way to an "undisclosed army base," which was under the protection of his old unit, the 33rd Paras, the Red Berets. Sanogo, who chaired the junta of junior officers, offered as a pretext the army high command's failure to equip the security forces properly, as mentioned above. The rebels had already taken Menaka, Aguelhoc, and Tessalit, along with its nearby Amachach airbase. A few days after the coup, with the chain of command broken, army troops abandoned Mali's three northern regional capitals, Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu. In the immediate wake of the coup, there was looting of shops and restaurants in Bamako, and private vehicles were stolen by soldiers. In addition, at least half a dozen of ATT's ministers were arrested. Meanwhile, the CNRDRE was formed, based at the army barracks at Kati. Internally, most Malian political parties condemned the coup, but Oumar Mariko, one of the co-founders of Coordination of Patriotic Organizations of Mali (COPAM) began to organize political support for the coup leaders. COPAM, an umbrella organization favorable to the overthrow of ATT, was not formally inaugurated until April 6, but it quickly formed an alliance with Sanogo and found

73 Interview 106, Part 1; Interview 110, Part 3.

74 Whitehouse, B. Blog Entry April 19, 2013, p. 3.

75 Unless otherwise indicated, I am relying for the events of the coup itself on ICG Report No. 189, 2012, pp. 1–41.

76 Moyar, Mark. "How Misguided U.S. Aid Contributed to Mali's Coup," *Bloomberg Opinion.* March 11, 2013, p. 2.

common cause with unemployed Bamako youths, of whom there are many, and disgruntled military personnel.[77]

Externally, condemnation of the coup was nearly universal, including international organizations like the United Nations and the African Union (AU), as well as the US and the European Union. Regional organizations, notably the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), also condemned the coup against Mali's democratically elected government that had only weeks to go until the next regularly scheduled elections. ECOWAS leaders met in Abidjan on March 27, calling for an immediate restoration of constitutional order. They sent a delegation of six West African heads of state to Bamako to engage the coup makers in discussions. However, the plane carrying the delegation was not allowed to land by crowds of pro-junta demonstrators who blocked the runway at the airport. Unable to land safely, the plane returned to Abidjan, where ECOWAS leaders imposed stiff sanctions on the Malian junta and threatened the closure of all borders connecting Mali with ECOWAS countries. If such border closures had been fully implemented, landlocked Mali would no longer have had access to regional ports such as Dakar, Conakry, or Abidjan. In addition, ECOWAS froze Malian bank accounts in the regional central bank and threatened military intervention. An agreement was signed on April 6 between CNRDRE and ECOWAS representatives agreeing in principal to an interim government that would hold power until elections could be rescheduled. The agreement did not sideline the coup leaders, but deposed president ATT did emerge from hiding to sign a constitutionally required letter of resignation, thus paving the way for the inauguration of Dioncounda Traoré, president of the National Assembly, as interim president of Mali. Traoré's weakness was revealed just 10 days later when he accepted the CNRDRE's choice of Cheikh Modibo Diarra to serve as prime minister with powers to name a slate of government ministers, having had no input himself into the selection process. Despite Traoré's acquiescence to the junta's choice of prime minister, a new wave of arrests occurred on April 16 that netted, among others, some close to Interim President Traoré.

Aftermath of the Coup

Over the next few months some ugly incidents played out that revealed rifts in both the military and the interim government. Deadly clashes broke out on the streets of Bamako on April 30, 2012, as troops of the 33rd Paras (Red Berets) exchanged fire with Green Beret supporters of the junta. The number of dead remains uncertain; however, some wounded Red Berets were taken to the junta's barracks at Kati, and have not yet been accounted for. Ultimately the 33rd Paras regiment was dissolved. The incident led to consolidation of the junta's control; however, it also revealed deep fragmentation within the military. Less than a month later, on May 21, Dioncounda Traoré was "violently assaulted" by demonstrators at the presidential

77 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, p. 21 n. 6.

palace at Koulouba. The 70-year-old interim president was badly beaten, requiring him to be flown to France for an extended period of medical treatment. Neither the leaders of the demonstrators nor the army and security personnel on the scene did anything to protect the interim president. The attack on Traoré was linked to his long association with the Malian Democratic Alliance (ADEMA), the party of Mali's first democratically elected president Alpha Konaré and dominant party in the Assembly during the presidency of the independent ATT. ADEMA was to many Malians emblematic of the corruption of the democratic regime, and the interim president was attacked either because the demonstrators did not want to see ADEMA in a strong position within the interim government, or, as a US Embassy officer suggested, because some of the demonstrators were seeking to benefit from access to diversion of funds through corruption themselves.[78] Lebovich suggests kickbacks on cocaine profits may have come to some of Sanogo's officers after the coup, just as they are believed to have done to ATT's military officers.[79] Paradoxically, the incident seemed to have a calming effect on the political situation. Subsequent negotiations involving CNRDRE and members of the interim government resulted in two decisions. First, the interim presidency and government were given a one-year mandate, after which new elections would be organized. Second, junta chief Sanogo was named a "former head of state," entitling him to certain legal protections and a substantial pension. In any event, the beating incident at the palace clearly revealed that the junta and the interim president were not on the same page.[80]

Indeed, it had become apparent that there were by mid-2012 three poles of power in the capital: the junta, led by Capt. Sanogo; the prime minister, Cheikh Modibo Diarra, supposedly chosen with the approval of the junta; and the interim president, Dioncounda Traoré, linked to the unpopular but still politically significant ADEMA. In the words of one of my interview respondents, the Gao business woman, what was needed was some kind of joint declaration from the three parties indicating they agreed on a plan to proceed with Mali's greatest remaining problems, the pacification of the north and the scheduling of elections. She said the lack of a coherent policy among the three centers of power was preventing the army from acting. Similarly, she insisted, the international community feared divisions within the interim government, and that was why they were hesitating to endorse an international force to intervene in the north.[81] As 2012 wore on, however, little was done to bring the three poles of power in Mali together. Indeed,

78 Interview 115 (US Embassy Official, American). This same source also implied that some of Sanogo's officers at Kati may have been amassing money since the coup through payoffs and *magouille*, and that such rumors had become a source of concern among Embassy officials.

79 Lebovich, 2013a, pp. 1–3.

80 ICG Report No. 189, 2012, pp. 22–5.

81 Interview 106, Part 2.

on December 11, a week before my departure from Mali, Diarra was forced to resign as prime minister by pressure from the junta.[82]

Northern Mali under Islamist Occupation

The Islamist occupation of northern Mali took place between late June 2012, when MUJAO and Ansar Dine, with some help from AQIM, expelled the remnants of MNLA from the regional capitals, to mid-January of 2013, when the Islamists made a push into southern Mali only to be confronted by the hastily deployed French intervention force. During that time, not much actual fighting occurred. The campaigns of MUJAO and Ansar Dine were insurgencies because their goal was, at least in the case of MUJAO, to overthrow the government of Mali and replace it with an Islamist government, and they were terrorist organizations because they used terror tactics to accomplish their goals. AQIM had used terror tactics for many years, going back to the time when it was still called GSPC. Since affiliating with al-Qa'ida, it had begun to use Qa'ida-style terror tactics, including suicide bombings and VBIEDs. Ansar Dine and MUJAO used insurgency type tactics when they attacked Malian army posts and garrisons along with MNLA in early 2012. After taking control in the cities in late June, they were in power, so they did not use the kind of terror tactics that terrorist organizations conducting asymmetrical warfare operations use. They instead used terror tactics consistent with state terrorism, the type practiced by regimes in power. They did, however, at least in the case of MUJAO, revert to suicide bombings and other terror tactics commonly used in asymmetrical warfare as soon as they were driven from power by the French intervention force.[83]

MUJAO in Gao

As mentioned above, MUJAO appeared to make some effort to win popular support, especially among the majority Songhai, around the time it expelled the remaining MNLA fighters from the city in late June of 2012. The group made infrastructural repairs and brought in foodstuffs from Algeria. Gasoline and diesel also arrived by truck from Algeria, much of it via the border entrepôt of al-Khalil.[84] This bid for popular support gave MUJAO the legitimacy it needed to expel the abusive MNLA.

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82 Interview 116. The evening before the removal of Prime Minister Diarra (December 10) a friend called me and suggested that I not go out that night, which puzzled me. When I learned the next morning of Diarra's removal, as well as that troops had been seen on the streets of Bamako in the wee hours, I understood why.

83 Morgan, Andrew. (2013b) "Northern Mali—Options, what options??!!" *Andy Morgan Writes …* Blog Entry. January 2013, p. 1.

84 Interview 113, Part 1; Mouaki, Samira. "Tribes, Smugglers, Jihadis Roil Northern Mali Conflict," *El-Khabar* (Algeria). September 18, 2012, p. 1.

MUJAO continued these conciliatory policies into the summer months, including relaxed enforcement of shariah law and continued infrastructural support such as providing money for fuel for Gao's power plant. But by early August MUJAO began to change its attitude. Enforcement of shariah law was stiffened, and an amputation was carried out at Ansongo, downriver from Gao.[85] A young displaced resident who had fled Gao with his family gave testimony on how the people of Gao felt towards MUJAO during the early months of the occupation. "About half of the population of Gao has fled. The rest are hoping the army will come back and chase MUJAO out. The people are ready to support the army." On the other hand, MUJAO did find some support among the people. "The MUJAO pay people to work for them. They pay by the month. MUJAO freed the prisoners, and many joined the Islamists. They carry arms for MUJAO. The MUJAO fighters, including the new recruits, are supplied with housing and monthly stipends. Fighters are often housed in government buildings, including the Algerian consulate."[86] Other sources generally confirmed the witness's account, saying MUJAO recruited young people from nearby villages known for strict observance of Islam, some of which are locally regarded as "Wahhabi" villages.[87] MUJAO recruited not only local youths and local notables for support, but also recruited from neighboring countries. Some of the recruits were committed Islamists, while others were seeking financial gain. MUJAO offered Qur'anic school students signing bonuses and monthly salaries to recruit them. Gao mayor Sadou Diallo estimated that between 200 and 300 Qur'anic school students were recruited by MUJAO in this fashion.[88] MUJAO set up camps in the countryside around the city to train the recruited child soldiers as fighters. The Qur'anic schools were allowed to function normally, but private secular schools were shut down. Public schools were still operating, but most of the teachers had fled the occupation.

The young displacee gave detailed testimony regarding daily life for the people of Gao under the MUJAO occupation.

> Q. How do you get information from Gao?
> A. Images and texts are stored on phone cards, then they are smuggled in pockets or in linings of clothing out of Gao, Kidal also.
> Q. Do people come and go freely from Gao?
> A. People do come and go, but they are subject to search. Some people who have fled return to Gao from time to time to look after relatives or businesses. Small shops remain open. The government bureaucrats have all fled; only the hospital

85 Lebovich, 2012, pp. 2–3; ICG Report No. 189, 2012, pp. 16–17.

86 Interview 113, Part 1.

87 See Lebovich, Andrew. (2013b) "The Local Face of Jihadism in Northern Mali." Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. June 25, 2013. http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/the-local-face-of-jihadism-in-northern-mali

88 Lebovich, 2012, p. 3; Larson, Krista. "Mali Radicals Recruited Child Soldiers at Schools," AP. February 23, 2013, pp. 1–2.

> workers remain. They are paid by the patients who come in for treatment. The bars and clubs are closed. Some restaurants are open. Cigarettes, films, music, dance are all banned. Women are beaten for not covering their heads. Some women were stoned for associating with men not their husbands. Many women have fled Gao to escape this mistreatment. The Islamists treated people badly in Gao. There were beatings and amputations. The women had to cover their heads. Women could not ride on the back of motorcycles [behind a man]. If you had a car, your wife had to sit in the back seat. Everyone in Mali is Muslim. People get along with each other. There is no need for such things as intolerance and abuse of citizens for minor infractions.[89]

Journalists and other interview respondents confirmed the harsh treatment meted out by MUJAO on the residents of Gao, often for petty offenses. One reporter said the mayor's office was turned into a shariah court. People were whipped for smoking, and women were beaten for "immodesty." Jihadis carried out amputations in a sandy public square in Gao. At least 12 men had had hands or feet cut off by MUJAO enforcers since April 2012. Witnesses claimed the harsh punishments were disproportionately meted out to black ethnic groups, including Songhai, Bellah, and Bambara, though these groups do form the majority at Gao.[90] Another interview respondent, the businessman displaced from Gao, confirmed that the Islamists' government is shariah law and Islamic courts. "They [the Islamists] have vice patrols called *mutaween* who patrol the streets. Suspects who are detained have no procedural rights or lawyers."[91] During the course of this interview the respondent received a phone call from an uncle at Gao. The caller's son was one of two young men whose hands had been amputated that day for alleged thefts.

Another interview respondent, a school teacher displaced from Goundam by the occupation, described how Songhai ethnic militias, including Ganda Koy and Ganda Izo, were participating in the resistance against MUJAO. Ganda Koy dates from the 1990–95 Tuareg Rebellion (see Chapter 3), but Ganda Izo was founded in 2011. They were volunteer militias, not integrated into the army. They claimed to be under the control of the Malian [interim] defense minister. The Ganda Koy had some 2,400 men under arms, while Ganda Izo was smaller, with "at least a thousand," the displaced resident, himself a former Ganda Koy militiaman, said. He said the Ganda Koy was deployed during the occupation between Markala and Mopti. Along with regular army soldiers, it formed part of the military barrier keeping back the Islamists. Some Ganda Izo members, he claimed, were working undercover in Gao, feeding information back to their comrades along the Markala-

89 Interview 113, Parts 1, 2, 3.

90 Hilsum, Lindsey. "Inside Gao where Arab jihadis took bloody sharia retribution on Mali's black Africans: The people of Gao endured nine months of amputations and floggings under the rule of Islamist rebels— much of it aimed at ethnic groups." *The Guardian.* February 23, 2013, pp. 1–2.

91 Interview 107, Part 2.

Mopti axis.[92] The defensive lines maintained by the Malian army supported by the Songhai ethnic militias between Mopti and Konna, including the strategic Sévaré military airfield, held against the Islamists until their push into central Mali in January of 2013, which is what triggered the French intervention.[93]

Ansar Dine in Timbuktu

As mentioned above, my most important eyewitness source on the war in Timbuktu was a government bureaucrat who was obliged to leave his job and flee with his family to escape the depredations of Ansar Dine. He said the group was composed largely of Malian Tuaregs. "But among the Islamists are some foreigners coming from Arab countries like Algeria and Western Sahara and from West African countries like Chad and Nigeria, even Pakistan. Foreigners are paid by the Islamists. The money comes from drug trafficking and also from the Gulf States, especially Qatar."[94] Documents found at an Ansar Dine recruitment office in Timbuktu after the Islamists fled revealed that recruits also included Mauritanians and Nigeriens, as well as many Malians, including people from the south of the country.[95] The respondent continued giving testimony about how life had changed in Timbuktu during the Islamist occupation.

> The entire bureaucratic class has fled the city, along with their families. The Islamists have destroyed anything owned by the government. They have done the same in Gao and Kidal. There is no functioning administration. Water and power are sporadic. There is no government presence, except for patrols of Islamists and the shariah courts. Among the merchants, those from Timbuktu stayed behind. The rest of the merchant class fled the Islamists. Commerce has collapsed in Timbuktu. Bars are smashed, restaurants and hotels are closed. People can't work. No one is working. Food, clothing, and medicines are brought in by truck. They are paid for by families and agencies from the outside. The Islamists let these goods enter by truck. Cigarettes and television are banned. Schools have closed. Radio only broadcasts Arab-style music. The Islamists have imposed Islamist dress on both men and women. Women must wear veils. Women caught not properly veiled get their heads shaved. Men must have beards and shaved heads and wear *boubous* [robes].[96]

When I asked about the lot of the people displaced from Timbuktu, I was told most refugees from Islamist rule in the north were scattered among the cities of the

92 Interview 105 (School teacher, from Timbuktu, works in Goundam), Part 1.
93 Interview 104, Part 2.
94 Interview 104, Part 2.
95 Lewis, David. "Islamist inroads in Mali may undo French war on al Qaeda," Reuters. March 13, 2013, p. 1.
96 Interview 104, Part 2.

south of Mali. Some were with families, others were housed in schools or unused buildings. Some were in refugee camps, some in Niger and Burkina.[97] At the end of our first interview session I asked him to speak freely, as I often did in these interviews. He said, "I want peace in the north. I want the Islamists expelled. They are false Islamists. Amputations and drug trafficking are not part of Islam. These are things God does not like."[98]

The abandoned documents mentioned above also indicated that AQIM chief amir Abdelmalek Drukdal himself had been in Timbuktu for as long as 10 months. Among the jettisoned documents was a letter from Drukdal criticizing Ansar Dine for being too hasty to impose shariah law. He writes that the tolerant, moderate brand of Islam found in Timbuktu would not respond to such harsh measures. In particular, Drukdal criticized the destruction of Timbuktu's World Heritage-listed shrines and the religious punishments, including stoning of adulterers and lashing of people for minor offenses. He said Malians, even in the north, were not ready [for strict implementation of Islamic law], and such eagerness would backfire and make the population hate the jihadists.[99] Drukdal's letter shows how severely Ansar Dine violated the Qur'an's requirement that rulers be held accountable by the community. They also show the more experienced Drukdal understood there are limits to the degree of zealotry that can be imposed on an unwilling population; the imposition of shariah law must be introduced gradually to communities not used to it. Drukdal learned this bitter lesson in Algeria when the people rejected the "Great Demarcation" of 1996 that pronounced *takfir* on the entire Algerian people. Further, Islamic law may allow harsh punishments under certain conditions, but the law also places restrictions on when and how and to whom these measures may be meted out, and failure to observe these restrictions is in itself a violation of Qur'anic law. Another interview respondent, an expert on both Islamic and secular law, makes this same point, with considerable elaboration, below. If reports that Drukdal spent 10 months in Timbuktu are true, this sojourn reveals a great deal about the importance the Malian project must have had within AQIM's overall agenda and about the degree of oversight AQIM may have had on the Islamist militias and their occupation of northern Mali. AQIM's role in the occupation, especially in the far north, will be discussed at some length in the next section.

Oumou Sall Seck, the mayor of Goundam, not far from Timbuktu, also discussed conditions in her town under the Islamist occupation. Seck, the first woman to be elected mayor of a northern town (pop. 16,000), had overseen the construction of a community center to encourage women's economic self-sufficiency. The community center was subsequently destroyed by the Islamists. She said the Islamists looted the women's health center and forced the women out of the community center. Seck had to flee for her own safety. She described the

97 Interview 104, Part 2.

98 Interview 104, Part 1.

99 Callimachi, Rukmini. (2013b) "In Timbuktu, al-Qaida left behind a manifesto." Associated Press. February 14, 2013, pp. 2–3.

Islamists as, "Lawless and godless men who hide behind Shariah and demands for Tuareg independence are now beating and raping women and conscripting children to fight their 'holy' war." In Seck's view, three factors contributed to the "present crisis:" 1) poorly handled rebellions, 2) failure to decentralize power [on the part of the Malian government], and 3) an influx of armed men and drug traffickers during and after the 2011 war in Libya. Seck expressed pride in Malian democracy, but added it "has shown its weaknesses." She continued, "Jihadist criminal groups like Ansar Dine and the Movement for Unity [Tawhid] and Jihad in West Africa [MUJAO], working with drug traffickers and armed separatists, are threatening democratic institutions, national unity, and secularism in Mali." Mayor Seck, like many Malians I spoke with, condemned the Islamists and their occupation of northern Mali, saying their measures were so harsh that they alienated the people. She also accused them of hypocrisy, linking them with drug trafficking and separatism. And she stressed their incompatibility with Malian values, such as "co-existence of different ethnic groups in a secular society."[100]

AQIM in the far North

AQIM had maintained a presence in the far north of Mali, operating in the northern part of the Région of Kidal since at least 2003. They had dug in in the north, and caches of food and weapons had been left in caves near their desert bases.[101] Kidnapping victim Robert Fowler, who was held for months in northern Mali by his AQIM captors, commented that "al-Qa'ida owns northern Mali." He also said that during the four months of his captivity, he never saw his captors buy gasoline or shop at a market, and yet they had food and fuel. He believed they were relying on caches of food and weapons that had been laid in over the years.[102] AP reporter Rukmini Callimachi says al-Qa'ida had two secret bases in the north of Mali some 200–300 km north of Kidal, one in the hills of Tirgharghar, equipped with tunnels, roads and even solar panels, and another near Boghassa on the Algerian border. It is here where the hostages were kept pending their release negotiations, and it is from these bases that AQIM exerted a degree of control over its client militias MUJAO and Ansar Dine. These bases are also near Tessalit, with its airfield, where arms can be imported by air. Drug traffic also passes through this area on its way to the Algerian border at Badji Bordj Mokhtar or Tin Zouaten. There was no central control in the north; the towns were controlled by the militias, either Ansar Dine or MUJAO, and sometimes MNLA. AQIM maintained direct control over its bases and some degree of control over the towns occupied by the militias as well, if reports of AQIM leaders such as Belmokhtar and even Drukdal spending months at a time in Malian cities are to be believed. Both of the Islamist militias

100 Seck, Oumou Sall. "Save Mali before It's Too Late," *New York Times* Op. ed. December 28, 2012, pp. 1–2.

101 Callimachi, 2013a, p. 1.

102 Callimachi, 2013a, p. 3.

initially received support, including arms, from AQIM, and both appeared to be to varying degrees responsible to AQIM as the occupation wore on.[103]

The various armed groups operating in the north had differing goals and agendas. AQIM wanted to keep the drug trafficking routes open and to maintain control of their bases so they could cache arms and supplies and hold their hostages until ransom negotiations could be completed and so they could sustain their operations across the Sahelian countries. The MNLA wanted an independent, secular state in Azawad (northern Mali). Ansar Dine wanted Azawad to be an Islamic state, while MUJAO, for its part, wanted to maintain the territorial integrity of Mali, but wanted the entire country to be an Islamist state. AQIM and MUJAO received some logistic support from Algeria, especially fuel and supplies, as well as access to medical facilities for their wounded, though it is not clear to what degree the Algerian military government and its agencies were responsible for this support. Qatar also provided food and supplies to both AQIM and MUJAO during the occupation; notably, Qatari aid arrived in Gao just after the MUJAO capture of the city.[104] Similarly, the various groups and individuals within the groups had different levels of commitment to Islam and the Islamist agenda. The MNLA was clearly secular-nationalist. Previously people thought the idea of the Tuareg imposing shariah law was unthinkable. While the Tuareg have been Muslim for centuries (see Chapter 1), their culture was not compatible with a strict interpretation of Islamic law. Women, for example, traditionally had many rights and responsibilities, and they were never veiled, though the men were, and are. Some Tuareg appeared to come under the influence of stricter version of Islamic law and practice after exposure to the Pakistani Tablighi preachers in the 2000s, but it is not clear how many were affected and how deeply. Ansar Dine was publicly committed to an Islamist agenda, but individuals within the organization seemed to vary in their personal commitment. Many young boys and men appear to have signed on as mercenaries, not always because of religious conviction.[105] One interview respondent, a Malian government operative with extensive experience in the north, believed that even Iyad ag Ghali was not a committed Muslim, and that he could be bought off. This same source believed many Ansar Dine supporters were, however, committed to their Islamist agenda, and most MUJAO fighters were similarly committed.[106] Many other Malians, including many I talked with, insisted the whole Islamist agenda and mystique in the north was merely a cover for drug and human trafficking and organized crime, and that all of the groups were equally hypocritical in this regard, including AQIM and MUJAO.[107] Cover or not, there were some instances of rigorous versions of Islamic law being imposed in the northern towns during the occupation, as there were in Timbuktu and Gao.

103 Interview 105, Part 1; Interview 107, Part 1.
104 Interview 114; Interview 107, Part 1.
105 Interview 116.
106 Interview 114.
107 Interview 104, Part 2; Seck, 2012, p. 2.

Adam Nossiter reports the stoning of an unmarried couple in Aguelhok in July of 2012. He says "bearded Islamists with Kalashnikovs" brought a young couple to the town center from a nearby village, and they were stoned to death in front of "hundreds of witnesses."[108]

Before we move on to the international intervention, which will be discussed in Chapter 8, we must address three important questions that came up frequently during my research. These questions are: 1) Who has legitimacy and authority in Islam? Who can tell whom what is correct Islamic belief/practice? 2) What is the link between the Islamist militias and drug trafficking and organized crime? 3) What is the degree of connection between Boko Haram and the Malian Islamist militias? Regarding the first question, journalist Hannah Armstrong notes many Malians believe Arabs are racist and consider black Africans as inferior. Malians, however, do not grant Arabs a monopoly on interpretation of Islam. They prefer their own version of Islam "leavened by pluralism and compromise-seeking."[109] Armstrong's observations are consistent with Bruce Hall's analysis as discussed in Chapter 1. A Malian lawyer and writer gave his critique of divine law as promoted by the Islamist militias in northern Mali, saying

> Divine law is always reformative, progressive, and it promotes justice. Divine law has been applied by the prophets in social contexts. As the contexts change, the application of divine law must continue to be reformative and just. It must not try to recreate earlier applications of divine law [i.e. amputations, lapidations, etc.] that were applied in earlier [social] contexts.[110]

In other words, he is saying that applications of Islamic law derived from bygone centuries are not acceptable today if they are not reformative and just in today's social context. He listed tricks used by political Islamists to assert their religious and political authority, one of which relies on the concept that God alone is sovereign (*hakimiyya*). This concept traces to the Khawarij dissidents of the early Caliphate. But *hakimiyya* nullifies free will and leads to reliance on predestination. This concept, the lawyer continued, results in confusion of religion and politics, a situation he traces to the era of the Rashidun, especially the Caliphate of Uthman (644–656). This confusion of religion and state continued under the Umayyads, he added, and is at the root of the problems of modern political Islam, or Islamism, today. Islamism, he claims, is a "menace to secularism [*laicité*] and to religious pluralism, and it threatens countries that have an Islamic tradition."[111]

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108 Nossiter, Adam. "Islamists in North Mali Stone Couple to Death," *New York Times*. July 30, 2012, p. 1.

109 Armstrong, Hannah. "A Tale of Two Islamisms," *New York Times*. January 25, 2013, p. 2.

110 Gakou, Mamadou. *Le Filon* (Mali) No. 3. 6 September 2012, p. 2

111 Gakou, 2012, p. 2.

An interview with a family of Malian legal scholars familiar with Islamic law, Malian national law, and international law offered additional analysis along these lines. These scholars questioned the authority of the Islamist militias to impose Islamic law on Malians and claimed that, indeed, the Islamists themselves were guilty of violations of Islamic law.

> MNLA, AQIM, Ansar Dine, and MUJAO are all the same. They have all committed the same crimes. The difference is that MUJAO is composed of foreigners from Mauritania, Nigeria, even Pakistan. The militias are perturbers of order and corruptors of the land. Mali can strike back against them under shariah, national law, or international law. Expulsion of the rebels is a legitimate jihad for Malians. "Perturbation of the peace" and "corruption of the land," these are grounds for self-defense under shariah.[112]

They said some Tuareg who visited Saudi and the Gulf area spoke of trying to impose Islam on the black pagans of West Africa. This kind of talk, they insisted, was aimed at garnering financial support from the Gulf Arabs. But they said the imam of the Grand Mosque of Mecca traveled to Mali two times. He found this talk was not true. If anything, the blacks of Mali were more Muslim than the "white" Tuareg. As an example, the lawyers mentioned that black imams preached in most of the mosques of Kidal. They continued,

> Shariah forbids conversion by force. One cannot force another to be a Muslim or adhere to shariah. Conversion must be effected by wisdom, exhortation, and example. No compulsion in religion [*lah icraha fil din*]. Not just anyone can apply shariah. It must be applied by recognized cadis and enforced by recognized magistrates, not an outside group. The Islamist militias have neither the requisite moral quality nor the educational level of real cadis [Islamic judges]. Rebellion against one's national government and corruption of the land are both forbidden in Islam. The crimes of the militias, committed in the name of Islam, are themselves crimes condemned by Islam. These crimes, such as massacres and armed aggression, are also condemned by international law. Under Malian law [*doit positive*], crimes such as rebellion, theft, violence, murder, etc. are called "perturbation of order." Some are serious violations of national law. Is it for Mali to defend itself against these aggressors? From the point of view of shariah law, yes. From the point of view of positive [national] law, yes. From the point of view of international law, yes.[113]

These legal scholars expressed views commonly held, if less eloquently expressed, by many Malians with whom I talked. The majority of them were offended by the arrogance of the Islamist militia leaders, whom, they felt, considered themselves

112 Interview 111, Part 2.
113 Interview 111, Part 2.

superior, morally and spiritually, to black Africans. They were likewise offended and angered that these "ruffians," whom they regarded as more interested in "drug trafficking and whoremongering" than in Islam and justice, would presume to preach to ordinary Malians about religion. I encountered this attitude and this sense of outrage among many Malians.

This brings us to the second question mentioned above, the connection between drug smuggling, kidnapping, human trafficking, and other forms of organized criminal activity and the radical Islamism preached by the occupying militias. This question, which also came up all across Mali during my research, is discussed by many, if not most, commentators on the Mali War of 2012–13, but none have explored it more effectively, at least with regards to MUJAO, than social anthropologist Judith Scheele and blogger and analyst Andrew Lebovich. Scheele has shown how the trafficking in South American cocaine by Malian and Algerian Arab traders, among others, is an outgrowth of decades, if not centuries, of regional trade in a variety of commodities, most of them mundane and omnipresent, but some of them exotic, with a very high value to bulk ratio, and destined for markets far beyond the Sahara. She demonstrates how this Saharan regional commerce, even movement of ordinary commodities, was forced into increasingly illegal patterns of trade by the imposition of false borders and differential economic policies across those borders. The traffic in cocaine, therefore, is merely an extreme form of the *al-frud al-haram* traffic that became widespread at least as early as World War II.[114]

Lebovich's most effective treatment of the link between MUJAO and the cocaine traffic is found in his well-written blog entry, "Trying to Understand MUJWA." He goes into considerable depth attempting to explain apparently contradictory aspects of MUJAO's occupation in Gao. These contradictions include its accommodationalist approach at the start when it attempted to win popular support, in contrast to its hardline application of shariah law after the first few months of the occupation, as well as its ban on cigarettes and harsh punishments meted out to petty drug peddlers, in contrast to its widely acknowledged links with smugglers and traffickers. Lebovich attempts to explain these difficult contrasts by pointing out that MUJAO recruited widely, both among non-Malians and among local youths from Gao and its surrounding towns, some of which were under the influence of reformist Sunni ("Wahhabi") Islam. With such a large number and range of origins of recruits, he comments, there would likely be a range of degrees of conviction and motivations for joining the movement. Some would be attracted to the abundant cash MUJAO could distribute, while others would be motivated by conviction. Similarly, Lebovich considers whether there might not be a range of factions within the group's leadership as well, some of whom might be motivated by access to rents associated with the contraband and trafficking, both legal and illegal, while others might be motivated more by devotion to the jihadist-Salafist

114 Scheele, 2012b, p. passim. See also Brachet, 2012, p. 252.

cause and pursuit of their chiliastic dreams.[115] While this explanation might not appear satisfactory, it is useful to remember that, as Lebovich points out, many Islamist and other religiously or politically motivated movements have been known to attach themselves to criminal elements in order to raise funds for their cause. Ready examples include AQIM, the Taliban, or the Colombian FARC. If this scenario is accurate, it would make MUJAO, and to a lesser degree perhaps, Ansar Dine, prime examples of "hybrid" groups, as discussed in Chapter 2, movements motivated by both religious and/or political conviction and illicit gain.

That leaves question number three: Are there confirmed and substantial links between the Nigerian Boko Haram and the Malian Islamist militias, particularly MUJAO? We briefly examined this question in Chapter 6 with respect to the period between 2010 and 2012 and found the evidence sketchy and inconclusive. During the occupation, however, and continuing on into the intervention period beginning in January 2013, the reports of such links became more frequent and, to some degree, better substantiated. Jon Gambrell, writing in March of 2013, says Boko Haram fighters have been making trips to Mali "for years" for training purposes. He adds that US Ambassador to Nigeria Terrence McCulley claimed extremists moved between Nigeria and Mali, even during the French military operation.[116] Another report says "hundreds" of self-described Boko Haram fighters got training from AQIM in Timbuktu, where they learned, among other things, to fire "shoulder-mounted weapons."[117] Nigerian journalists, in an interview with Lt. Gen. Azaibuke Ihejirka, Nigerian Chief of Army Staff (COAS), quote him as saying, "The rising wave of terrorism in the country has been attributed to, among other factors, the affiliation of the Boko Haram sect to Mali rebels Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al Shabab … " The chief of staff adds that security forces found a "strong link between the Boko Haram sect and terrorists in the Maghreb, including rebels in Mali, who provide them with training, funding and weapons."[118] In addition, one of my interview respondents, a displaced bureaucrat from Timbuktu, claimed Boko Haram fighters had been seen at AQIM bases in Mali, adding, "They come and go."[119] The most convincing evidence for links between Boko Haram and the Malian Islamist terrorist militias comes from Jamestown Foundation analyst Jacob Zenn, who says,

> First, news reports from Mali said that 100 Boko Haram militants reinforced MUJAO's positions in the battle for Gao and that Boko Haram helped MUJAO

115 Lebovich, 2012, p. passim.

116 Gambrell, Jon. (2013b) "US: Islamic Extremists move between Nigeria, Mali," AP. March 14, 2013, p. 1.

117 Hinshaw, Drew and Adam Entous. "On Terror's New Front Line, Mistrust Blunts U.S. Strategy." *Wall Street Journal.* February 27, 2013, p. 2.

118 Ezeobi Chiemelie and Sandra Ukele. "Ihejirika: Malian Rebels Fund, Train, Equip Boko Haram." *This Day Live.* April 3, 2013, p. 1.

119 Interview 104, Part 1.

> raid the Algerian consulate in Gao and kidnap the vice-consul, who was executed by MUJAO on September 2, 2012, and that Boko Haram supported MUJAO, AQIM and Ansar Eddine in their January 8, 2013, attack on Kona [sic], central Mopti region. Second, displaced persons from Gao, including a former parliamentarian, said that Boko Haram is training at MUJAO-run camps. Third, military officials from Niger said that Boko Haram militants are transiting Niger en route to Mali on a daily basis. Fourth, a MUJAO commander said in an interview with a Beninese journalist for Radio France Internationale that Boko Haram members were arriving in Gao en masse. Fifth, U.S. Africa Command General Carter Ham, who in January 2012 said Boko Haram has links to AQIM and al-Shabab, said in November 2012 that Boko Haram militants train in camps in northern Mali and most likely receive financing and explosives from AQIM. In addition, the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria, Nigerian minister of foreign affairs, Nigerien foreign minister, Malian foreign minister and Algerian minister for Maghreb and African affairs report that Boko Haram and AQIM are coordinating operations in northern Mali.[120]

Zenn's citations are mostly from mainstream French press agencies like Agence France Presse and News 24, as well as from Reuters and AP. While these accounts seem more compelling than those that appeared between 2010 and 2012, the general tone remains sketchy, using terms like "most likely," for example. Even more disturbing, they stem largely from interviews with policy makers, including high-ranking Nigerian officials and AFRICOM's Gen. Carter Ham. In other words, they resemble similar reports in tone and derivation that emerged previously and were discussed in Chapter 6. From these reports, one may conclude at least some Boko fighters visited Mali and possibly Algeria and received some training there and may have participated in certain military actions and engagements. But the extent of this training, likewise the extent of funding and support Boko Haram may have received from AQIM and its affiliates, remains unclear.

In the spring of 2014, Boko Haram grabbed world headlines as never before with a mass kidnapping of over 200 schoolgirls in the town of Chibok, some 80 miles from Maiduguri, the movement's longtime base and the capital of northeastern Borno State. This was not the first time that Boko Haram has kidnapped women and girls. Smaller numbers of female captives, some of them Christian have been taken by the group in the past, but this action stood out because of its scale.[121] Even as this volume is going to press, the situation has not been resolved. Amid conflicting reports as to the exact time of the kidnapping

120 Zenn, Jacob. "Boko Haram's International Connections," West Point Combatting Terrorism Center. January 14, 2013, p. 1.

121 Duthiers, Vladimir, Faith Karimi, and Greg Botelho. "Boko Haram: Why terror group kidnaps schoolgirls, and what happens next." CNN. May 2, 2014; Freeman, Colin. "Nigeria schoolgirls kidnapping: Boko Haram to announce list of key militants it wants freed." *The Telegraph*. May 13, 2014.

and the number and identities of the victims taken, serious questions have arisen regarding the capacity of the Nigerian military to effect any serious rescue attempt. Discussions have been held regarding possible cooperation with and even intervention by troops of other countries, including a possible role for US SOF troops, as well as proposed prisoner exchanges and various ransom deals. But no serious plan has been advanced, much less implemented. As in the past, observers and critics have noted the Nigerian military's record of brutality and corruption, and have even referred to the country's "existential crisis" as more and more groups, ethnic, political, and sectarian, are claiming marginalization and are becoming increasingly hostile to the state.[122] As is the case with Mali, chronic state fragility and dysfunction appear to be even greater threats to Nigeria's future national viability than do terrorism and insurgency.

Developments in Northern Mali

By late 2012, as some form of international intervention began to appear more and more imminent, significant jockeying occurred among the Islamist militias and their former ally MNLA. This jockeying included, at times, outbreaks of fighting among the militias, especially Ansar Dina and MUJAO. The families of the Islamists in Gao began to close their shops and flee as word spread that an international force was coming.[123] In November of 2012, information began to reach Bamako that Ansar Dine and MUJAO were fighting each other in Menaka. According to a version of the events related by one of my interview respondents who was displaced from Gao but in regular contact with friends still there, Ansar Dine and MNLA had asked MUJAO to quit Menaka. They refused, so fighting broke out, reportedly forcing MUJAO out of the city. However, according to my source, fighting continued between the groups, forcing Ansar Dine out of Timbuktu where MUJAO fighters replaced them around November 10. Ansar Dine, reportedly, had wanted to forswear any connection with MUJAO and reconcile with the government of Mali in advance of the arrival of an international force. Many Ansar Dine fighters had fled to Burkina, taking their heavy weapons with them. They were saying publicly they were willing to abandon their demand of the imposition of shariah law nationwide. They were repudiating MUJAO, calling the rival group a "bunch of foreigners," while they, Ansar Dine members, were Malians. Ansar Dine's abandonment of Timbuktu left the group in control in Kidal, while MNLA controlled Menaka, and MUJAO was in control in Gao and Timbuktu.[124]

The Gaois interview respondent said MNLA was based in Tahaoua in Niger by late November, southwest of Agadez and not far from the Malian border. He

122 Nossiter, Adam and Alan Cowell. "Nigerian Leader Cancels Visit to Village of Abducted Girls." New York Times. May 16, 2014; Adibe, Jideofor. "Boko Haram in Nigeria: The Way Forward." Brookings, Africa in Focus Blog. May 14, 2014.

123 Interview 106, Part 2.

124 Interview 113, Parts 3, 4.

added that President Compaoré of Burkina was pushing Ansar Dine and MNLA to fight MUJAO and to present themselves as loyal Malians, unlike MUJAO and AQIM, which are, according to this scenario, composed of non-Malians. Compaoré was at this time leader of the ECOWAS mediation team, and it was ECOWAS that was supposed to be organizing an international force to intervene in northern Mali. Compaoré's sheltering of Ansar Dine and cultivation of MNLA was causing a rift between him, and by extension ECOWAS, and Malian public opinion, according to the respondent, because most Malians were not willing to forgive MNLA, whom they blamed for starting the whole rebellion in the first place.[125] Another source, the school teacher displaced by the fighting from Goundam, near Timbuktu, generally corroborated this view, saying some MNLA fighters and some of their leaders were also in Burkina as Compaoré's guests. He said Compaoré's willingness to support MNLA was one reason most Malians were reluctant to trust ECOWAS.[126] Another respondent, a US Embassy staffer, said that in mid-December 2012, Ansar Dine had absorbed many MNLA fighters and might be preparing to make a bid to support the international force, helping it expel MUJAO and AQIM from Mali. He added that, regardless of the jockeying for position among the Islamist terrorist groups, three main problems affecting all of Mali were still ongoing. First, the Tuareg were continuing their decades-long process of claiming their national rights (*révindication*). Second, the traffic in drugs, contraband, and human beings was continuing. Third, the political situation in Bamako was still deteriorating. Indeed, Prime Minister Cheikh Modibo Diarra had been forced by the junta to resign his post the very morning of our interview.[127] French foreign ministry official Laurent Bigot, who once referred to Mali as a "sham democracy," remarked in mid-2012 that "Mali can collapse, and as long as Bamako remains, they will all squabble over scraps of power in Bamako."[128]

Conclusion

By mid-December 2012, as my time in Mali drew to a close, the occupation of northern Mali also appeared to be nearing an end. It was taken as a given that some sort of international force would arrive and drive out the occupying militias, though no one knew what form that force would take or how soon it would arrive. The terrorists and insurgents themselves seemed to understand their time of occupation was ending, as indicated by the jockeying and infighting that had broken out among them as early as mid-November. Malians and international observers alike seemed already to be contemplating what a post-occupation Mali would look like,

125 Interview 113, Part 4.

126 Interview 105, Part 2.

127 Interview 116.

128 Whitehouse, Bruce. "What Went Wrong in Mali?" *London Review of Books.* August 30, 2012.

though few had any clear vision. Many of the problems that led to the rebellion and the subsequent occupation of the north were still unresolved. What was to become of the ethnic Tuareg and Bidan of northern Mali, whom Malians generally blamed for the rebellion? Would Mali's democracy be restored, and, perhaps more importantly, could it be reformed and rendered transparent and answerable to the people, and would Malians support it? What was to become of the Islamist terrorists, including AQIM? Would they be defeated, "killed," as I heard some Malians call for, or would they regroup in neighboring countries? Or, possibly worse, would they dig in in the far north and continue their insurgency on a lower but sustained level? What was to become of the systemic problems of organized crime, drug trafficking, trafficking in labor migrants, and trafficking in otherwise mundane commodities such as cigarettes and even foodstuffs? And what would be done about the problem of collusion in these forms of illegal commerce by high-level officials, not only in Mali but also in neighboring countries, including Algeria? What would happen to Mali's army? Would it be healed and restored to fighting strength under proper civilian control, or would it remain fragmented and corrupt, and would it, as is the case in Pakistan, continue to threaten intervention in Malian politics?[129] What would become of Boko Haram and its splinter group Ansaru? Would they continue to expand their linkage with North and West African Islamist terrorists, or would they fade from the scene not only in the Sahara but in northern Nigeria? Lastly, and perhaps most importantly for Mali, would the cycle of corruption, including *magouille*, favoritism, election fraud, and bid rigging, be broken, or would it continue to keep Mali vulnerable to instability, stifled development, and popular malaise? While Malians could take some satisfaction that the insurgents and terrorists then occupying the north had begun to fall out among themselves, no one had any clear answers to the above questions.

Neither did anyone appear to realize the Islamist insurgents, or some of them, were on the verge of a renewed offensive that would carry the fighting to the central Malian Région of Segou, as far as the town of Diabaly. This renewed offensive actually put the Islamists within striking range of the capital Bamako. Perhaps their objective was to launch a motorized attack on Bamako, hoping to seize the capital before an international force could be mobilized. The upshot of the renewed offensive, as will be discussed in Chapter 8, was to galvanize the international community, especially the French, resulting in the arrival of a foreign, French-led intervention force much sooner than most expected. This intervention stopped the Islamists' offensive, then threw them back and expelled them from their river strongholds of Gao and Timbuktu and, ultimately, from the desert city of Kidal. But it did little to answer the questions posed above. Chapter 8 will examine the international intervention force and its push into northern Mali that resulted in the death, capture, or expulsion of most—but not all—of the Islamist insurgents.

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129 Pakistan, ostensibly a democracy, has been under military rule for more years (since independence in 1947) than it has been under democratically elected leaders. A running joke is that, while most countries have an army, Pakistan's army has a country.

It will also discuss the process of elections in the summer of 2013 that restored, on paper at least, Mali's democratic institutions. But neither the intervention and subsequent reversal of the Islamists' occupation of the north nor the return to electoral politics and civilian rule would be able to answer the lingering questions that plague Mali and, to varying degrees, the other nations of the meta-region.

Chapter 8
Intervention and Restoration

Introduction

Despite impatience on the part of the Malian people and the international community, the hoped-for invasion of the north was delayed by at least three factors. First, the Malian army was in terrible shape, hollowed out by corruption under the democratically elected administrations and weakened by infighting since the 2012 coup. Second, ECOWAS troops were not yet trained for desert warfare and were not properly equipped. Third, a detailed invasion plan was not yet in place.[1] An additional problem was that ECOWAS and the Malian transitional government were not on the same page in terms of goals and objectives, and in terms of vision for a post-war West Africa. Blaise Compaoré, president of Burkina, was the head of the ECOWAS mediation team. Under Compaoré's leadership, the team had entered talks with the MNLA and Ansar Dine after the two rebel groups promised Compaoré they would support the Malian army against MUJAO and AQIM. But most Malians were still bitter towards the MNLA, believing it was their fighters who had started the rebellion in the first place.[2] Algeria had also entered into talks with the leadership of Ansar Dine, pushing it to break its ties with AQIM. By the end of 2012, Ansar Dine was based in Kidal, having abandoned Timbuktu to MUJAO. Kidal is the only Région of Mali with a Tuareg majority, and its mountainous redoubts were considered likely places for resistance to any invasion force seeking to retake the north from the rebels. Kidal is dominated by the Kel Adagh, or the Ifoghas lineage. The *amenokal* of the Kel Adagh is Intallah ag Attaher. Intallah's son Alghabass ag Intallah had been MNLA, then he became the second in command of Ansar Dine. By late 2012, Alghabass had formed the Islamic Movement of Azawad (MIA), effectively dropping the word "Liberation" from the name. Both the MIA and the MNLA were in discussions with ECOWAS. By January 3, the MNLA was openly seeking an alliance with the French against what was left of the Islamists, though such an alliance would have been unacceptable to the Malian army, which was not yet ready to forgive the MNLA.[3]

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1 Interview 115 (US Embassy official, American).

2 Interview 105 (School teacher, from Timbuktu, works in Goundam, former Ganda Koy) Part 2.

3 Morgan, Andy 2013a. "Options in Mali? What options!" *Al-Jazeera.* January 30, 2013, p. 2.

The political situation in the north of Mali was further complicated by developments in the capital, as the resignation under duress of Prime Minister Cheikh Modibo Diarra on December 10 made the interim government seem further than ever from being capable of strong, unified action.[4] The Malians were also worried about France's willingness to accept help from the MNLA. Many Malians had long considered the leaders of ECOWAS countries to be in the service of French policy.[5] On December 20, 2012, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2085, authorizing deployment of an African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) to be headed up by Nigeria. But the AFISMA plan was overtaken by events, as we shall see, in mid-January.[6] By early January, the political situation in the capital had worsened significantly as Mali's pro-junta groups called for "sovereign national consultations." Demonstrations, some of which turned violent, began on January 9 in Bamako and in Kati, the junta's garrison headquarters. According to the International Crisis Group, staging these demonstrations may have been a military-civilian plan to challenge the transitional government, which the Malian public never really accepted.[7] However, these demonstrations too were overtaken by events beginning on or before January 9, as Islamist fighters from Ansar Dine, MUJAO, and AQIM launched an attack into central Mali in "several dozen" armed technicals. Journalist Matthias Gebaur says some 300 Islamists traveling in 100 technicals participated. He suggests they may have been making a bid for control of the capital, though the International Crisis Group believes the objective was the strategic airfield at Sévaré, near Mopti.[8] The immediate objective was the town of Konna, within striking range of Sévaré.[9] So while demonstrations by pro-junta political groups were going on in Bamako and Kati, armed Islamists were advancing towards Konna. According to North Africa and Sahel analyst Andrew Lebovich, this push into central Mali was led by a local marabout named Amadou Kouffa, whose had become radicalized in recent years.[10] The capture by the Islamists of Konna and Diabaly, a small but strategically placed town to the west, triggered the French military intervention,

4 International Crisis Group Africa Report No. 201. "Mali: Security, Dialogue and Meaningful Reform." April 11, 2013, pp. 2, 3.

5 Diakité, Mountaga. *"Mali—une' démocratie' contre le peuple."* Unpublished document. December 13, 2013.

6 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 3; "Mali army 'regains Konna and Diabaly' from rebels." BBC News Africa. January 18, 2013, p. 2.

7 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 4.

8 Gebauer, Matthias. "Resisting Islamism: Life on the Front Lines in Mali." Spiegel Online International. January 28, 2013, p. 1.

9 Tinti, Peter. "With France bearing down, key rebel in Mali splits from Islamists." *Christian Science Monitor.* January 24, 2013, p. 4; ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 6.

10 Lebovich, Andrew, 2013b. "The Local Face of Jihadism in Northern Mali." Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. June 25, 2013.

which began on January 11.[11] Needless to say, the demonstrations in the capital ended with the intervention.[12]

The French Intervention

"Operation Serval" (wildcat) commenced on January 11, 2013. French President François Hollande, at the request of the interim government, had agreed to help Mali defend itself against the Islamists' southern initiative. He immediately deployed planes, then troops, landing at Sévaré.[13] The intervention, one of 50 such French military interventions in Africa since the 1960s, was very popular in Mali. It was also well received internationally, with the African Union, the UN, EU, US, and even China supporting it. Nigerien President Mahamadou Issoufou called Operation Serval, "the most popular of all French interventions in Africa."[14] Within hours of the Islamists' arrival in Konna, French bombs began falling. The next day French special forces arrived, searching for Islamists. At first the fighting was limited to airstrikes and a few ground combat operations.[15] The same day the French operation began, ECOWAS scrambled to ramp up its planned AFSIMA deployment. They too had been surprised by the Islamists' southern offensive. Chad, not an ECOWAS member, quickly deployed troops to Niger, and from there they headed towards Gao. Some 2,000 of them arrived to support the French. The Chadian troops had been trained for desert warfare, unlike those of the coastal ECOWAS countries such as Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire.[16] By January 18, France had some 1,800 troops in Mali, including a contingent at Segu to guard the strategic bridge at Markala, some 35km downstream. Airstrikes had taken place at Léré, Konna, Douentza, Gao, and Diabaly, and French forces were deployed at Bamako, Segu, Sévaré, and Niono. The intervention had, up to that time, consisted primarily of airstrikes, including the January 17 bombing of the town of Diabaly to the west of Konna, and some 350km from Bamako. Diabaly had been captured by Islamists earlier in the week in a possible attempt to set up an advance on the capital. By the afternoon of January 18, Malian troops were mopping up in Diabaly, where many enemy vehicles had been destroyed by the French airstrikes.[17]

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11 "Mali army 'regains Konna …" 2013, pp. 1–2. Diabaly is strategically located on the road that leads to south Segu, and Segu is astride the main road to the capital, Bamako.

12 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 4.

13 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, pp. 6–7.

14 Mann, Gregory. "Welcome to Mali." *Africa is a Country.* March 22, 2013, p. 1; ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 7; Bergamschi, Isaline. "Mali: Waiting for Blue Helmets? Prospects for a UN Mission to Mali." *All Africa.* April 23, 2013.

15 Gebauer, 2013, p. 2.

16 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 8.

17 "Mali army 'regains Konna …" 2013, pp. 1–2.

Timbuktu and Gao

With the Islamists' southern offensive in tatters, the French moved to retake the northern regional capitals of Timbuktu and Gao. For these operations, Malian troops were integrated into the French ranks, though the French took the lead. Gao fell on January 28 with little resistance from the Islamists, and Timbuktu fell two days later with no resistance.[18] Residents in Timbuktu celebrated the end of the occupation and welcomed the French troops as heroes. The Islamists had fled the city before the arrival of French forces, but not before destroying a few more Sufi tombs and shrines in a parting shot. In retaliation, the shops of Malian Arab merchants, regarded as collaborators, were looted by residents. President Hollande made a surprise visit to Timbuktu on February 2 to receive the greetings of the people and visit the troops.[19] The liberation of Gao, despite only limited resistance on the part of MUJAO fighters, did not go as smoothly as that of Timbuktu. To begin with, some abuses on the part of Malian troops were reported following the capture of the city, including the torture of prisoners and some summary executions of civilians. These reports provoked criticism from French commanders and boded ill for the campaigns to come in the far north.[20] Additionally, MUJAO leaders as part of their strategy had recruited heavily among young boys at the city's Qur'anic schools. The Islamists believed the boys' knowledge of Arabic would make the students more susceptible to Islamist propaganda. This recruiting went on even as the French force approached. When the Islamists fled Gao, many of these young recruits fled with them, taking refuge in towns along the river, several of which had become radicalized either during the occupation or through the teachings of foreign or foreign-inspired preachers prior to the occupation. Many of these young recruits were subsequently killed in French airstrikes, either in central Mali or in Gao itself, including "dozens" who died in the bombing of an abandoned government customs building where they had been living.[21] Even more disturbingly, the Islamists counterattacked after infiltrating back into the city from towns along the river. Mali's first known suicide bombings occurred on February 8, followed by others over the next day or so. By February 10, MUJAO gunmen had reentered Gao, taking advantage of the diversions caused by the suicide bombings. The gunmen engaged Malian troops who had taken up positions in the city, but they were defeated with the help of French troops. The disruptions lasted for two or three days before the Islamist counterattack was contained. The gunmen had used canoes to reenter the city to challenge French and Malian forces. They had come from Kadji, across the river, which was known to be a pocket of Wahhabism. Clashes had occurred on the outskirts of Gao since the city fell to

18 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 8.

19 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 9.

20 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 9.

21 Larson, Krista. "Mali Islamist Militants Recruited Child Soldiers at Schools as Part of MUJAO Strategy." *Huffington Post World.* February 23, 2013, pp. 1–2.

the French on January 26, but the attack on February 10 was the first to reach the city center. The MUJAO counter-offensive, though quickly subdued, was another omen of the possibility that a long war might lie ahead for the French and for Mali.[22] As Gao finally became secure, informers led French troops to MUJAO bomb factories. Meanwhile, Tuareg and Arab ethnics fled or were expelled from Gao and Timbuktu either by Malian soldiers or angry residents. Residents looted the villas of Gao's "Cité du Cocaine" after they were abandoned by fleeing drug smugglers who had hitherto enjoyed the protection of the militants.[23] So many Tuareg and Arab families fled Malian cities such as Gao, Tessalit, even Mopti, that the Algerian border was backed up at places like al-Khalil with hundreds of families trying to make it to the refugee centers at Timiawin.[24]

The use of suicide bombings by MUJAO and its supporters is, as mentioned in Chapter 7, an example of asymmetrical warfare, of the type commonly employed by Islamist (and other) terrorist organizations when they are confronting a militarily superior enemy. Prior the liberation of Gao by French and Malian troops, MUJAO had in fact been the superior military force in the city, and they had had no need for asymmetrical warfare. The ready resort to such tactics, scarcely 10 days after the fall of Gao, confirms my characterization of MUJAO as a terrorist organization as well as an insurgent force.

Kidal

French forces took Kidal in late January. No Malian troops were included in the French ranks partly because of French concerns over their indiscipline and revenge attacks like those that took place at Gao, and partly because the MNLA and the newly formed Islamic Movement of Azawad (MIA) asked the French not to use them.[25] Even worse, in the eyes of the Malians, France was calling for dialogue with "legitimate representatives" from the armed groups.[26] This diplomatic jargon meant France was willing to talk to MNLA rebels and to accept their support in the fight against the Islamists. Freelance journalist Andrew Morgan says the French were willing to work with MNLA because they believed the Malian army could not fight a protracted campaign against Islamist

22 Hirsch, Afua, 2013b. "Mali conflict: French-led forces retake Gao after surprise attack by rebels." *The Guardian.* February 10, 2013, p. 1; "Islamic extremists invade Gao." *The Guardian.* February 10, 2013, p. 1; Lewis, David. "In Mali town, counter-insurgency task ties down French." Reuters. February 14, 2013, pp. 1, 3; ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 10.

23 Lewis, 2013, p. 3; Knickmeyer, Ellen and Drew Hinshaw. "Upheaval in Mali Curbs Drug Traffic." *Wall Street Journal.* March 29, 2013, p. 1.

24 Soko, N. "Hundreds Flee for Algeria as Mali War Intensifies." *Almonitor.* January 21, 2013.

25 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, pp. 9, 11.

26 "France says Mali mission 'succeeded,'" *Al-Jazeera.* January 31, 2013.

holdouts in the desert, even with the support of ECOWAS troops.[27] The Ifoghas leadership had let the MNLA back into Kidal because they did not want to be turned over to the Malian army, whom they believed wanted revenge for their support of the MNLA's rebellion and of the Islamist militants who later took over that rebellion.

By the end of January, the MNLA had seized Kidal from the last of Ansar Dine's fighters and claimed control over Léré, Tessalit, and Menaka.[28] Therefore, only Chadian forces helped the French as they swept through the Ifoghas Mountains of the Kidal Région. The Chadians had much experience in desert warfare, some of it against Islamist rebels in their own country. They deployed in small mobile units that could cover 500km in a day.[29] On February 5, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drain told reporters French, Chadian, and MNLA troops were in control of Kidal. He described the MNLA as "facilitators." Clearly, the MNLA was positioning itself for talks with the Malian government after the defeat of the Islamists. And the French were giving the group legitimacy by accepting its help in battling the militias for whom the desert around Tessalit was the last stronghold. In an effort to underscore the fact they had broken ties with the Islamists, MNLA troops captured two senior Islamist commanders and turned them over to French forces in Kidal.[30] The UN Security Council and the US do not list MNLA as a "terrorist organization." But many Malians see it as a group of rebels and insurgents no different from MUJAO and Ansar Dine. French goals centered on ending the hostage taking, while Mali's goals centered on reclaiming its occupied territories.[31] These differences underlie the separate wars being fought in Mali's north. Such differences will likely cause problems later between Mali and its French allies and will work to the advantage of the Islamists. Behind the scenes we see what Greg Mann has identified as two separate wars; he calls them called Mali's war and France's war in the north. When the Malians talked about fighting terrorists, they included the MNLA, whose rebellion, they believe, started the war. When the French talked about fighting terrorists, they meant the kidnappers, who were still holding French hostages as the war raged in the far north.

Tessalit

On February 8, French forces seized the oasis town of Tessalit and its strategic Amachach airbase. Heavy fighting took place in and around Tessalit, including

27 Morgan, 2013a, p. 1.

28 Morgan, 2013a, p. 1.

29 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 11; Tinti, 2013, p. 1.

30 Dioura, Cheikh. "French battle Mali Islamists as Tuareg problem looms." Reuters. February 6, 2013, pp. 1–2; Hirsch, Afua, 2013a. "Tessalit assumes vital importance in Mali's struggle against Islamist rebels." *Guardian Africa Network.* February 4, 2013.

31 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, pp. 11–12.

suicide car bombings that hit MNLA.[32] Journalist Afua Hirsch calls Tessalit the "Key to the Sahara," saying that France, Mali, the Tuaregs, and Algeria have all fought for control of it. The airstrips at Amachach are the largest north of Gao, better than those of Kidal. Capable of handling large jet aircraft, they are the best way to fly strategic assets into northern Mali. The French used them in the 1950s to fight the Algerian FLN, as mentioned in Chapter 2, and the US used them to fly SOF troops in and out of northern Mali during the PSI and the TSCTP, as mentioned in Chapter 5.[33] Tessalit itself is a large oasis town, the last in Mali before reaching Algeria. Islamist rebels were dug in in the mountains around Tessalit, where they had many caches of arms and supplies and many wells.[34] Once Tessalit and its airstrips were secured, the French began Operation Panther on February 18. This operation consisted of protracted sweeps of the hilly area around Tessalit, including the Tirgharghar Mountains. The next day a 50-troop French patrol was ambushed by about 30 Islamist fighters some 50km south of Tessalit. Air support was called in, and 20 insurgents were killed, along with one French legionnaire, the second French troop to die in the war. On February 22, heavy fighting occurred, including suicide bombings at Tessalit and other clashes in which 23 Chadians as well as 65 Qa'ida fighters were killed.[35]

By early March, according to Admiral Eduard Gaillard, the French army's chief of staff, French forces had uncovered more than 50 weapons caches, a dozen workshops, and 20 IEDs in the hills around Tessalit.[36] French military commanders estimated there were between 1,200 and 1,500 Islamist fighters active in Mali, while Chadian officials claimed more than 90 militants had been killed in a series of skirmishes in late February. French aircraft flew hundreds of sorties in the Tessalit region during the last week in February.[37] Civilians remained in the camps at Tin Zawaten and Timiawin as security concerns continued in the Région of Kidal through late February and into early March. A French diplomatic source compared the situation in Mali with that in Afghanistan, with Algeria playing the role of Pakistan. He said Islamists can retreat to the border area and operate from there. This analysis is consistent with reports, mentioned above, that for some time AQIM and MUJAO had been able to receive some support and shelter from Algeria, though

32 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 11; "Heavy casualties in northern Mali fighting." *Al-Jazeera.* February 23, 2013.

33 Keenan, Jeremy. "'Secret hand' in French Sahel raid: Jeremy Keenan on why attempt to liberate French hostage was an 'unmitigated disaster.'" *Al-Jazeera.* August 29, 2010, p. 1.

34 Hirsch, 2013a, pp. 1–2.

35 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 11; Nako, Madjiasara and Joe Penny. "Ten Chadian soldiers killed fighting Islamists in Mali." Reuters. February 24, 2013; Crumley, 2013b. "The War in Mali: Does France Have an Exit Strategy?" *Time World.* February 26, 2013; "France confirms tough fight in northern Mali." *Al-Jazeera.* February 27, 2013.

36 "France skeptical over Mali rebel-leader death." *Al-Jazeera.* March 4, 2013.

37 Crumley, 2013b, p. 1; Cruickshank, Paul and Tim Lister. "Prominent al Qaeda figure in Mali killed by French, Chadian forces." CNN.com. March 1, 2013.

not necessarily provided by or with the knowledge of the Algerian government. Perhaps even more frustrating for France, none of the eight French hostages held by the terrorists was found in the area of the Qa'ida bases. Worse yet, another seven French hostages, all members of the same family, had been kidnapped in Cameroon on February 26 by the Boko Haram-linked splinter group Ansaru.[38]

If France's war against the Islamist hostage takers seemed inconclusive and uncertain as of March 2013, so did Mali's war against the MNLA separatists. Tuareg rebels reentered Kidal in late February and early March, after the French had taken the city in late January, and the regional capital remained under rebel control until July when Malian government officials returned to assume uneasy authority.[39] So, the Région of Kidal, and especially the Ifoghas Mountains around Tessalit, would prove to be the most difficult area to secure. This difficulty is not surprising, given the fact that this same area had been the epicenter of virtually all of the Tuareg-led separatist insurgencies since colonial times, and likewise ground zero for the Islamist terrorist presence in Mali since at least 2003. And both the Tuareg separatists and the Qa'ida-linked terrorists had been stockpiling supplies and weapons in the area since at least 2006.[40] Nor was the Région of Kidal the only area where swathes of unsecured territory remained. Towns along the roads leading from Gao to Bourem upriver and to Menaka to the east also remained unsecured. Some of these towns had been radicalized by Islamist marabouts since before the 2012 war began. Even Gao and Timbuktu, nominally secure since late January, remained subject to suicide bombings, keeping those cities also destabilized.[41]

In Amenas

Scarcely a week into the French intervention in Mali, an incident occurred in neighboring Algeria that briefly made it appear as if France had stumbled into a much broader war. Islamist fighters seized a critical natural gas complex at Tigantourine, near the eastern Algerian town of In Amenas, taking dozens of hostages, many of them from Western and Asian countries. The facility was supplying 10 percent of Algeria's natural gas, the country's top export earner. The hostage takers were said to belong to Belmokhtar's "Signers in Blood" brigade, and spokesmen said the raid was in retaliation for France's intervention against the Islamists in Mali. The attack began early on January 16, when gunmen stormed

38 Crumley, Bruce, 2013a. "France's Mali Mission: Has al-Qaeda Already Been Defeated?" *Time World.* February 5, 2013; Crumley, 2013b, p. 1; ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 12.

39 "Mali government officials return to key northern city of Kidal, 16 months after rebel takeover." AP. July 11, 2013.

40 Interview 107 (Songhai merchant from Bourem), Part 1.

41 ICG Report No. 201, 2013, p. 10; Tinti, 2013, p. 1.

the gas pumping site and the workers' housing.[42] The terrorist attack on the In Amenas facility did not prove to be part of a wider Saharan war, but rather an isolated, if serious, incident. Nonetheless, it prompted Algeria to declare states of emergency across its Saharan reaches, from Adrar to Tamanrasset, and it led to a closure of the critical Algeria-Mali border area stretching from al-Khalil to Tin Zawaten, with jets patrolling over Timiawin and other border towns. It was the closure of the border area that made it difficult for Tuareg and Bidan civilians fleeing Mali before the advance of French and Malian troops to cross over into the refugee camps, resulting in a total blockage of trans-border trade.[43] Some days after the attack and subsequent siege at the gas facility, the Algerian prime minister reported that at least 38 civilians were killed over the four-day course of the affair, along with 29 militants. Nearly 700 Algerians and 100 foreigners survived; five people were missing.[44] The incident represented a setback to Algeria's reputation for stability, which was in the process of being restored after the "Dirty War" of the 1990s. It served as a reminder that Algeria's Saharan south remains the heart of its economy.[45] It also highlighted the regional links between Algeria and Mali and illustrated how both countries are linked by their Saharan core. In addition, just as the foreign hostages represented a range of developed nations across the world, the terrorist raiders likewise hailed from a number of nations, most of them within the meta-region, including, of course, Algerians, but also Malians, Nigeriens, and Mauritanians.[46] Further, In Amenas is very near the Libyan border, and the raid is believed to have been mounted not from Mali, which is on the other side of Algeria, but from nearby southern Libya, a region well beyond the control of Libya's current central government, which barely controls the country's coastal cities.

International Forces

Demands for some sort of international force to support the Malian army against the Islamist militias were being made even before I arrived in Mali in summer 2012. For the most part, these called for a force to be mustered by ECOWAS, as had been done during the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, presumably with Nigeria, the putative regional powerhouse, in the lead. But the West Africans had been unable to mobilize a regional force in the better part of a year, partly because of a lack of trust between ECOWAS and various factions in Mali.[47] Junta leader Amadou Sanogo and his political allies, including COPAM, mistrusted

42 Chikhi, Lamine and Bate Felix. "Sahara hostage siege turns Mali war global." Reuters. January 17, 2013.

43 Soko, 2013, p. 1.

44 "Timeline of the In Amenas siege." *The Guardian.* January 25, 2013, p. 7.

45 Chikhi and Felix, 2013, p. 2.

46 "Algeria details the deaths at In Amenas siege." Euronews. January 21, 2013.

47 Shillinger, Kurt. "Attacks in Mali, Libya, Algeria show why Africa still needs US support." *Christian Science Monitor*. January 28, 2013, p. 3.

ECOWAS because regional presidents had criticized the Malian coup right from the beginning, and had, for a long time, called for the reinstatement of President Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT), whom virtually nobody I talked to wanted back. And the Malian public at large had been, reportedly, mistrustful of ECOWAS ever since the attempted border closures just after the coup. Finally, after the French intervention force had already deployed, the first regional troops began to arrive in Mali. On January 15, the first 100 troops of a regional force landed in Bamako, including soldiers from Togo and Nigeria. In addition, Nigeria had promised some 1,200 more troops.[48] Finally, by the end of February, some two thirds of an 8,000-man AFISMA force had been deployed to Mali. But most of the AFISMA troops were not properly trained, so they remained in southern Mali, away from the front, while the French and the Chadians engaged the Islamist terrorists in the north. At an ECOWAS meeting in the Ivorian capital Yamoussoukro, regional leaders called for the UN to back the AFISMA mission with a peacekeeping mandate. The African deployment was hampered by a lack of transport and equipment. French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius called in early February for the African force to be rolled into a UN peacekeeping force by April. In March, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon also recommended the AFISMA force be absorbed into a 10,000-man UN force to be deployed before July, when elections had been tentatively scheduled.[49]

In addition to the West African regional force, the EU pledged €12.3 million to support a 500-man training force from various European countries that would train Malian troops over a 15-month period. French Gen. François Lecointre, who was slated to head the EU Training Mission to Mali (EUTM), stressed, in a press conference in Bamako, the need for equipment as well as training for Mali's impoverished and hollowed-out forces, though he cautioned that such equipment would exceed the €12 million budget thus far pledged. Malian armed forces chief Gen. Ibrahima Dembele, at the same press conference, got in a dig at the US counterterrorism training initiatives, including PSI and TSCTP, saying they had "failed to forge cohesion among Malian units", adding that he hoped the EU training would do better.[50] This failure to build cohesion among units may be linked to the way the US training missions had concentrated too much on elite forces, such as the 33rd Paras, ATT's old unit. Nonetheless, the Americans got into the act to support the French mission. The US as yet had done nothing to support the Malian effort to combat the Islamist terrorist militias in the north because of congressional restrictions on aid to military regimes that came to power by overthrowing duly elected governments. President Obama confirmed on February 23 that the US had sent 100 personnel to neighboring Niger to operate unarmed

48 "Mali army regains Konna and Diabaly …" 2013, p. 1.

49 Aboa, Ange. "African leaders call for U.N. mandate for Mali mission." Reuters. February 28, 2013, p. 1; Nichols, Michelle. "U.N.'s Ban recommends African troops in Mali become peacekeepers." Reuters. March 26, 2013; Dioura, 2013, p. 1

50 Fletcher, Pascal. "French general urges EU to equip 'impoverished' Mali army." Reuters. February 20, 2013, pp. 1–2.

drone reconnaissance aircraft to aid the French in gathering intelligence for their Mali operations. A deal had been signed in January between the US and Niger to open drone bases in that country.[51]

Restoration

Territorial Restoration

Intensive fighting continued into early March in the Kidal Région, especially in the hills around Tessalit. More than 50 Islamist fighters were killed, along with several Chadians and two more French troops.[52] A French Defense Ministry source reported on March 7 that operations were completed in the Adrar des Ifoghas, but that they were still looking for "remaining Islamist hideouts." But other observers felt the Islamists had melted back into their villages or crossed into Algeria or Niger, and that they might "re-form and conduct operations elsewhere."[53] Rudy Atallah, former Africa counterterrorism director for the US Secretary of Defense, described the Islamists' challenge as an insurgency and felt the French were underestimating the staying power of the Islamists. He said a few committed Islamists can do "a lot of damage."[54] On a more positive note, the Algerian TV station Ennahar reported that AQIM amir Abdulhamid Abou Zeid, formerly known as the group's "Amir of the South," was killed by a French airstrike near Aguelhok. This report was confirmed by AQIM sources on March 5. Abou Zeid, a rival of Belmokhtar, had his main base at Aguelhok "for years" before the Islamists seized northern Mali. He had been involved in several high-profile kidnappings, including that of Canadian diplomat and special UN envoy Robert Fowler in late 2008, so his death was regarded as a major coup by the French. He had reportedly resided near Timbuktu in much of 2012 but fled to Kidal and then to the Adrar des Ifoghas Mountains after the French intervention began.[55] Less encouraging was the fact that the Malian army was all but shut out of the fighting in the far northern combat zone. Malian troops had participated in the pacification of Timbuktu and Gao, but in the Kidal Région French and Chadian forces, with the support of MNLA remnants, did the fighting. Reports of abuses by Malian troops in Gao had resulted in an MNLA request that they be excluded from the far north theater. Only a handful of Malian troops, fewer than 20, all Tuareg, supported the Franco-Chadian

51 "U.S. troops in Niger to set up drone base." CBC News World. February 23, 2013.

52 Crumley, 2013a, p. 1; Whitehouse, 2013, p. 1 ("The north, the army, and the junta … ")

53 Irish and Nichols, 2013, pp. 1–2; Hirsch, Afua, 2013c. "Mali conflict could spill over into Western Sahara, warns Ban Ki-moon." *The Guardian*. April 9, 2013, p. 1.

54 Tinti, 2013b, p. 1.

55 Cruickshank and Lister, 2013, p. 1; "AQIM confirms Zeid died in Mali battle." March 6, 2013, p. 1.

force, serving as guides. The Malian press, including *Le Flambeau*, complained that the exclusion of Malian troops from the fighting in the far north amounted to an affront to Malian sovereignty.[56]

BBC reporter Thomas Fessy gave a sober assessment of France's war in northern Mali in late March, saying French soldiers compared the Tirgharghar Mountains east of Aguelhok to "Planet Mars." He said France had about 2,000 troops in the area, along with a similar number of Chadian troops. He quoted Gen. Bernard Barrera, commander of the French intervention mission, saying, "We broke al-Qaeda's neck." Barrera, whose headquarters were in Tessalit, also revealed that AQIM's positions had been near wells in the Ametetai Valley north of the Tirgharghar Mountains, the same area where Abou Zeid's bases were reported to be. This is where the French believed AQIM's Malian sanctuaries had been. They found construction vehicles, underground caches of weapons and supplies, including sacks of rice and drums of oil, and defensive trenches. French helicopters were swooping along the Ametetai Valley to drive out the rebels, while the rebels were responding with small arms fire and some SAMs.[57] Former CIA counterterrorism analyst Bruce Riedel reported that Qa'ida chief Ayman al-Zawahiri felt AQIM's defeat in northern Mali was a "bitter setback." Zawahiri had reportedly regarded the Qa'ida stronghold in northern Mali as the linchpin of a larger Qa'ida emirate stretching from Mauritania to Nigeria. This assessment, if accurate, indicates France's claims of defeating al-Qa'ida in Mali were not exaggerated.[58] But journalist Peter Tinti cautioned that French troops would still be needed on the ground and that Malian army actions would not be sustainable. In other words, Mali could not prevail without French air and land support. And, he continued, the Malian army might take months or even years to rebuild so Mali could again become a strong state.[59] Tinti's assessment appears to have been borne out by subsequent events discussed below. Meanwhile, there was a suicide car-bombing in Timbuktu at the end of March, and Gao had been attacked three times since February, highlighting the fact that the regional capitals were not yet totally secure. A reported 1,000 French troops, half the number fighting in the far north, were engaged in "Operation Gustav" in early April, mopping up Qa'ida logistical support in the Tilemsi valley between Gao and Kidal to clean out Islamist hold-outs.[60] Worse yet, suicide bombers struck a Nigerien military base at Arlit near Agadez on May 23. President Mohamadou Issoufu said the bombers, who killed dozens, came from southern Libya. Targeted were the worker barracks of a uranium mine operated by France's state-controlled uranium group Areva.

56 Whitehouse, 2013, p. 1.

57 Fessy, Thomas. "French fight in Mali's hostile desert." BBC News Africa. March 25, 2013.

58 Riedel, Bruce. "Al Qaeda Comeback." *Daily Beast.* April 12, 2013.

59 Tinti, 2013a, p. 1–2.

60 Moutot, Michel. "France launches major offensive on Mali Islamists." AFP. April 8, 2013; Knickmeyer and Hinshaw, 2013, p. 1; Marquand, 2013, p. 1.

Joint responsibility for the raid was claimed by AQIM's Belmokhar and MUJAO remnants. This attack in Niger, likely mounted from southern Libya, indicates, as Andrew McGregor says, the Islamists may have been defeated in Mali, but they were not trapped and destroyed, they were merely scattered. They can now, he says, return to their strengths—mobility and financial resources—and they can focus attacks on regional "apostate" governments and French interests.[61]

By early April, the focus had shifted to the European Union Training Mission to Mali (EUTM), which consisted of a hundred instructors from France, Britain, Sweden, and other EU members to train AFISMA forces. The AFISMA force had been authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 2085 in late 2012. EUTM began training a first battalion of 600 Malian troops on April 2. The first training mission was scheduled to last at least 10 weeks, with the entire training spread over 15 months, at a cost of some €12 million. The EU allotted €50 million total for the mission to cover allowances for troops and officers. The dispersal of the funding, which was not to cover weapons or other armaments, was to be supervised by ECOWAS.[62] US Permanent Representative to the UN Susan Rice expressed US support for AFISMA and its eventual transition into a UN peacekeeping mission. Speaking in early April, Rice said,

> The purpose of the UN operation, in our view, should be to contribute to the development of a secure, inclusive, and democratic state in Mali that includes all of the country's communities, and to support the full restoration of Malian sovereignty and territorial integrity. The transition from AFISMA to a UN blue-helmeted force under Chapter VII must occur, in our judgment, as soon as security conditions permit. And its role ought to be to stabilize the liberated areas and assist the Malian state in protecting civilians.[63]

Similar sentiments had been expressed earlier by Senator John McCain during a visit to Mali to meet with Interim President Dioncounda Traoré in early April.[64] The focus on AFISMA and its eventual conversion into a UN peacekeeping force reflected a winding down of the French-led combat operations in the far north of Mali.

As we have seen, conflicting reports of a defeat of the Islamists in northern Mali, but also of continued attacks in Mali and in neighboring countries like Algeria and Niger, indicate that AQIM has not been eradicated from the Sahara-Sahel region, but merely weakened and scattered, and that it is willing and able

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61 McGregor, Andrew, 2013a. "The Mobile Threat: Multiple Battlefields Ensure Instability in the Sahel/Sahara Region." *Aberfoyle International Security.* June 14, 2013.

62 Diallo, Tiemoko, 2013b. "U.S. wants to support fight against al Qaeda in Mali—senator." Reuters. April 2, 2013, p. 1.

63 "Remarks by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, At a Security Council Stakeout." U.S. Mission to the United Nations. April 3, 2013, p. 1.

64 Diallo, 2013b, p. 1

to operate from and in other unstable and unpoliced regional states such as Niger and Libya. Therefore, while Mali's occupied territories have been more or less restored to Malian sovereignty, the threat has not been completely eliminated; continued military operations will be necessary. With the military situation in the north relatively under control, attention turned to Mali's political crisis. The remaining section of this chapter will examine the political restoration, the return of democratic elections and elected governance to Mali. Here too we will see an incomplete picture, with noticeable gains, but also unfinished efforts.

Political Restoration in Mali

Speaking in late February, US Secretary of State John Kerry identified what he called "three keys" to stabilizing Mali: 1) fighting terrorists, 2) building a strong democratic government, and 3) improving the economic and humanitarian situation. By early April, the first key had essentially been accomplished. Though the terrorists were far from defeated, their occupation of northern Mali had ended. That left the two other keys, democratic governance and improved economy and humanitarian situation, which could apply to most of Africa. Most tellingly, Kerry's analysis does not directly address the problem of corruption in Mali. If the issue of corruption is not addressed, little will change, as we saw after Mali's democratic transition in the early 1990s. Democracy was installed, but the old evils persisted. Other observers, speaking a year after the March 2012 coup, made more penetrating comments. Peter Tinti noted Mali was still led by a transitional government composed of an "awkward and incoherent partnership," consisting of Dioncounda Traoré and the old political class with coup-maker Amadou Sanogo still holding ultimate power. He cited Susanna Wing of Haverford College, saying Mali needs a national conference to include civil society groups and other interest groups, like the *concertations* in 1994. Morgan added that incompetency still plagued the security forces and corruption still plagued the civil administration.[65] Historian Greg Mann noted in late March that many of Mali's problems remained unsolved. First, there was no ceasefire in place as of March 22, 2013. Second, some 400,000 Malians were internally displaced and many more were in exile, including, for example, 75 percent of Gao residents. Third, Kidal and other swaths of territory were still not under Malian sovereignty. Fourth, factions within the army were still fighting among themselves.[66]

Mali took a major step towards the restoration of democratically elected government, as mentioned above, with the agreement in the National Assembly in late January 2013 on a "roadmap" for the transition that called for elections to be held before the end of July. However, observers were concerned that the country might not be ready for elections that soon. Unless all parties made a commitment to

65 Tinti, Peter, 2013c. "In Mali, a war ends but instability lingers." *Christian Science Monitor.* April 9, 2012; Morgan, 2013a, p. 1.

66 Mann, 2013, p. 2; Knickmeyer and Hinshaw, 2013, p. 1.

peace and reconciliation, observers feared an election for which the country was not prepared could reinforce divisions and tensions.[67] The roadmap also called for the government to undertake serious discussions with the "legitimate representatives of the populations of the north," defined as locally elected representatives and civil society, and with the "non-terrorist armed groups which recognize Mali's territorial integrity." These terms are in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2085, adopted in December 2012.[68] The first round of the presidential election was set for July 28, with Interim President Dioncounda Traoré vowing not to run. A further obstacle was overcome on June 18 when an agreement was signed in Wagadugu, capital of Burkina Faso. The Wagadugu Accords allowed for voting to take place in Kidal, which was still under MNLA occupation. Until the accords were signed under the sponsorship of Burkinabe President Blaise Compaoré, the MNLA had threatened to block voting in the city.[69] Still, in early July, numerous problems persisted that gave rise to concerns over the legitimacy of any election for which the country was not prepared. These concerns included disarray in the voter rolls, biometric ID cards that were not completely ready, and continuing security concerns in the north. The International Crisis Group was calling for a 90-day delay in the elections schedule. Yet key donor countries anxious to resume long-blocked development aid, including the US and France, were insisting on the July 28 date.[70]

Besides problems with the looming election schedule, there also remained ethnic tensions, especially in the north. Bruce Whitehouse compares relations between the Tuareg and other Malians with another intractable rivalry, the Israel-Palestine conflict, saying that each side sees itself as the victim. Indeed, the Tuareg have been victimized by the army reprisals and brutalities as well as by civilian pogroms dating back as far as the *Alfellaga*. During the occupation in 2012 some Tuareg and Bidan civilians were attacked by mobs in Bamako and in Kati. Tuareg civilians, as the fighting wound down in the spring of 2013, probably feared retaliation from the army and the Ganda Koy militia more than they feared the Islamists. For this reason, many Tuareg civilians fled to Wagadugu (Burkina) when the French arrived in Gao with the Malian army.[71] Yet, Whitehouse insists, despite recent examples of persecution of the Tuareg by both military and civilian

67 International Crisis Group Africa Report No. 201, 2013, p. 1.

68 "Mali—Adoption of the road map and announcement of the holding of elections," *France Diplomatie.* January 30, 2013.

69 Whitehouse, Bruce, 2013e. "Give Mali's elections a 90-day breather." *Bridges from Bamako*, Blog. June 28, 2013.

70 Whitehouse, 2013e; Tinti, 2013c, p. 3; "The UN and Mali: Secure the Sahara, if you can." *The Economist.* July 6, 2013.

71 Whitehouse, Bruce, 2013b. "Understanding Mali's 'Tuareg Problem.'" *Bridges from Bamako,* Blog. February 25, 2013; Morgan, 2012b, p. 5; Morgan, Andy, 2013b. "Mali's Tuareg people retain dream of independence amid persecution." *The Guardian.* April 3, 2013.

actors, they cannot be considered an historically persecuted minority because of their history of enslaving blacks. Dark-skinned Tamasheq speakers, called *iklan* in Tamasheq and *bellah* in Songhai, are more numerous than light-skinned Tamasheq speakers. Yet many in the MNLA leadership still regard some *bellah-iklan* lineages as slaves. The Tuareg rebellion of 2012 once again raised the specter of slavery in Mali. Some former slaves were "re-captured" by the rebels during the chaos. Former slaves fear the continued rule of the Tuaregs at Kidal under the Islamic Movement for Azawad (MIA), a splinter group of the MNLA.[72] Because of such ethnic issues, as well as religious and nationalist issues, future stability in a unified Mali means some sort of dialogue with the northern peoples.

The Restoration of the Malian Army

Perhaps the most troubling sector among Mali's institutions remains the army. Divisions persisting within the army were highlighted by a minor mutiny on February 8, 2013, as Paras from the Djikoroni paratrooper base near the center of Bamako battled troops loyal to Sanogo. The Paras, or "Red Berets," are the same group that allegedly attempted a counter-coup in May of 2012. They are the old comrades of ousted president ATT. In the February 2013 incident, the Paras were reportedly resisting redeployment among Malian units participating in the reclamation of the north. The Paras, journalists claimed, said they wanted to remain as a unit, not be scattered among other engaging units. The gunfire aroused dismay among ordinary residents of the capital who were still celebrating the French intervention, and who feared such disruptions made the Malian army look disorganized when they should be participating in the liberation of their northern regions.[73] Junta leader Sanogo, for his part, despite having nominally handed power over to civilian leaders of the interim government, was accused of meddling in state affairs, including ordering the arrests of civilian and military opponents. For example, Sanogo's troops were behind the "retirement" of Prime Minister Cheikh Modibo Diarra, a member of the interim government, in December of 2012.[74] In an attempt to rein in Sanogo, Dioncounda appointed him president of a Military Committee for Armed Forces Monitoring and Reform on February 15. The purpose of this appointment was to get him out of Kati and away from the barracks of the troops loyal to him.

Despite the efforts of the interim president to control the junta chief, Sanogo continued to wield power, as evidenced by his order to arrest the editor of *Le*

72 Whitehouse, 2013b, pp. 1–2; Hicks, Celeste. "Families in Mali splintered by slavery as culture and conflict converge." *The Guardian.* April 3, 2013.

73 "Red Berets, Green Berets: Can Mali's Divided Military Restore Order and Stability?" Jamestown Foundation. February 22, 2013.

74 Diallo, Tiemoko, 2013a. "Paratroops mutiny in Bamako in blow to Mali security efforts." Reuters. February 8, 2013, p. 1.

Republicain on March 6.[75] Boukary Daou, the editor, was detained by state security agents after he published a letter written by a Capt. Touré that was critical of Sanogo and the salary he received, some $7,800 per month, while the army lacked equipment. Sanogo had been awarded the inflated salary after he had been designated as an "ex-president" as part of the agreement whereby he relinquished power to the civilian interim government in May of 2012. Daou was held without charge for two weeks before being transferred to the main prison. Mali's non-state-controlled press went on strike to protest Daou's arrest. The strike was ended after four days, following the release of Daou from detention on March 15.[76] Perhaps more disturbing than the squabbles within the army and between the army and the interim government is the way the army was shut out of the combat in the far north of the country. The French, who had clearly taken the lead both militarily and diplomatically in the fighting against the Islamists, did not want the Malian army in the Région of Kidal because of its track record at Gao and Timbuktu, which included torture and summary executions of prisoners and open hostility and violence toward reported collaborators. The army, along with most Malians, did not appreciate the French attitude towards the Tuaregs. The French were willing to accept military support from the MNLA, while the Malian army was not. Many Malians were still bitter towards the MNLA for starting the rebellion in the first place, and particularly for the massacre at Aguelhok. Highlighting the distance between most Malians and the Tuaregs is their disagreement over the disarmament provisions of the Wagadugu accords. The preliminary agreement called for "discussions" on disarmament, while most Malians, including the army, wanted the MNLA disarmed along with the rest of the militias.[77] In early July, with the election approaching, President Touré was still trying to close the rift in the army between the coup leaders and those loyal to ATT. Sanogo formally apologized for his actions during the 2012 coup in an attempt to show he was willing to work with Traoré. A few days after the July presidential election, Touré promoted Sanogo to the rank of four-star general in an unexpected and unpopular move that angered Malian and international human rights organizations. Human rights activists called the promotion a disgrace, feeling Sanogo should be taken to task for his role in the coup, not rewarded. The record of the army, including its internal feuds, its human rights abuses, and its flaunting of civil authority, makes it clear that any definitive resolution to Mali's crisis will mean the civilian leaders at the palace at Koulouba will have to take control of the military authorities in Kati.[78]

Meanwhile, the military situation in the far north remained fluid into the summer of 2013. When the Islamists fled Kidal City in February, MNLA forces

75 Bergamschi, 2013, pp. 1–2.

76 "Mali: Outrage over editor Boukary Daou's jailing." BBC News Africa. March 19, 2013; Whitehouse, March 6, 2013.

77 Mann, 2013; Whitehouse, March 6, 2013; Whitehouse, June 19, 2013.

78 "The UN and Mali: Secure the Sahara …" 2013; *"Mali: le capitaine Sanogo promu general." Le Figaro.* August 14, 2013; Mann, 2013.

took control. They established a de-facto state of Azawad, a goal of the original rebellion in early 2012, and began issuing documents, all with the complicity of the French intervention force. France tolerated the MNLA fighters in Kidal, but many Malians did not agree with this approach because they did not trust the former rebels. Worse yet, reports in the Malian press claimed MNLA leaders gave information to Ansar Dine remnants in the Ifoghas hills that may have contributed to the deaths of 25 Chadian troops in engagements in late February.[79] Similar claims were made to the effect that former Ansar Dine leaders, including some of Iyad ag Ghali's lieutenants, were serving in official posts in MNLA-occupied Kidal under the auspices of the new MNLA splinter group MIA. Other observers reported many Ansar Dine fighters had joined the MNLA for legitimacy. Kidal remained partially under the control of MNLA and the MIA until the time of the elections, when Malian officials were allowed to take up their posts there. As mentioned above, the French and the Malians never quite managed to agree on what was meant by fighting terrorism. When the French say they are fighting terrorism, they mean the hostage-takers. When the Malians say they are fighting terrorism, they mean the MNLA.[80] Malians talked of an armed solution to the remaining fighting in the far north, but they did not have the military wherewithal to fight the Tuaregs. Meanwhile, the French do not consider disarmament of the MNLA as a necessary ingredient in ending the fighting. Any disarmament of the MNLA will have to await some form of national dialogue.[81]

Clashes continued into early summer 2013 as the French troops and MNLA fighters contested with the remaining Islamist fighters for control of towns near Kidal. France had promised to keep 3,000 troops in Mali until the election in late July. After that, some 1,000 would stay on to hunt down dug-in Islamists. The UN, for its part, agreed on June 25 to a 12,600-strong peacekeeping force for Mali, with deployment to start July 1. It would include AFISMA troops already there, as well as the 1,000-man French anti-terrorist unit. The rest of the UN peacekeeping force, called the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was to be in place by the end of 2013, including, reportedly, a substantial 500-man Chinese force. Most of the MINUSMA force, authorized by Security Council Resolution 2100 of April 25, 2013, will be concentrated in the north, with a limited presence in Bamako. In addition to its primary mission of stabilization of the north, the UN force was also to provide logistic and technical assistance for the July 28 presidential elections.[82]

Meanwhile a report emerged in late August that remnants of MUJAO had merged with Belmokhtar's forces to continue the fight against France and French

79 Sogoba, Ibrahim. *"Kidal: Le MIA et le MNLA accusés de complicité dans la tuerie des 25 Tchadiens." L'Indicateur du Renouveau.* February 26, 2013.

80 Sogoba, 2013; Bergamschi, 2013, p. 1; Mann, 2013.

81 Whitehouse, June 19, 2013; Mann, 2013.

82 Besheer, Margaret. "African Troops in Mali to Become UN 'Blue Helmets.'" Voice of America. June 25, 2013; "The UN and Mali: Secure the Sahara …," 2013.

interests. The newly merged group reportedly took the name of al-Mourabitoun, after the medieval Saharan hoard known to European historians as the Almoravids. Its stated goal is to create an Islamic state in the Sahara. Belmokhtar's fighters and MUJAO had already claimed to have carried out one joint operation on May 23, the attack on France's Areva uranium mine in Niger that left dozens of mineworkers dead. Belmokhtar issued a statement to Mauritanian media to the effect that recent events in Egypt had indicated "Zionist and Crusader" forces want to destroy Islam, hence the formation of the new group.[83] Using classic Qa'ida rhetoric, Belmokhtar appears to be making a bid to bolster his global jihadist credentials.

The Restoration of Malian Democracy

The first round of Mali's first presidential election since the coup of 2012 took place as scheduled on Sunday, July 28, 2013. The frontrunners going into the balloting were two veteran politicians. One was 69-year-old Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK), former prime minister under Alpha Konaré, and presidential candidate in 2002 and 2007. His party is the Rally for Mali (RPM), which also supported him in 2007. The other was 63-year-old Soumaila Cissé, minister of finance under Konaré, and founder of the Union for Republic and Democracy (UDP). The provisional results were announced a few days later by interim Minister of Territorial Affairs Moussa Sinko Coulibaly. Keita carried 39.2 percent of the votes cast, while his rival Cissé garnered 19.4 percent, thus assuring a second round run-off between the two leaders. Twenty-five other candidates also stood for the office.[84] The Malian government announced that 53.5 percent of the country's nearly seven million registered voters cast ballots, a record turnout. Several candidates and their supporters, including many of Cissé's followers, denounced the count early on when it appeared IBK would win an outright majority in the first round. These complaints eased when the run-off was announced on August 2. Most observers agreed the election went better than expected: There were no rebel or terrorist attacks, and organizational problems, though substantial, were considered acceptable by most Malian voters. International monitors pronounced the balloting free and fair. It was not too good to be true, but it was clearly a credible vote.[85] The voting took place in an "atmosphere of calm," and many young people and women cast ballots. There had been considerable international support for the election, as so much was at stake not only for Mali but for the entire region and beyond. The EU, Denmark,

83 Diagana, Kissima and John Irish. "Sahara jihadist groups merge, threaten French interests— report." Reuters. August 22, 2013.

84 Gänsler, Katrin. "Mali: Joy and Anger after Mali's Presidential Election." AllAfrica. July 31, 2013; "Mali election: IBK and Soumaila Cisse in run-off." BBC Africa. August 2, 2013.

85 Look, Anne. "Mali Candidates Condemn Partial Election Results, Call For Run-Off." Voice of America. August 1, 2013; "Mali election: IBK and Soumaila Cisse in run-off." BBC Africa. August 2, 2013.

Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, Canada, and Belgium put up funds totaling $50 million to support the voting. The funds were administered by the UNDP. The US also contributed financial and technical assistance. The international financial support provided assistance to the Territorial Administration Ministry, the General Electoral Delegation, and the National Independent Election Commission (CENI). The UNDP in particular provided assistance for the registration of voters, using a biometric database intended to reduce vote fraud, a chronic problem in Mali's electoral history. It also trained 125,000 poll workers who operated some 21,000 polling stations throughout the country and provided voting equipment, including electric power generators for use in Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal. Numerous other NGOs helped facilitate voting by refugees and women.[86] IBK and Cissé faced off in the second round on August 11. IBK carried over 77 percent of the second round votes. Turnout was a respectable 45.8 percent.[87]

Many Malians expressed hope the election would "turn the page" on Mali's multiple crises—the coup, the rebellion, and the occupation—not to mention the popular disillusionment with Mali's political class after the failed ATT administration.[88] It should be pointed out that the 2013 election merely restored Mali's procedural democracy. Only time will tell if real change occurs in the political class, and if transparency takes root and Mali's chronic political corruption is significantly diminished. Cautious observers such as Northern Africa expert Wolfram Lacher suggested well before the election that the new Malian government may still be forced to work with local political leaders, especially those in the north, who are tainted by smuggling and trafficking in order to counter AQIM and MUJAO. He adds, however, that the collapse of ATT's corrupt regime allows a new opportunity to weaken organized crime networks and their hold over the north's underground economy.[89]

Conclusion

Many problems still lie ahead for Mali and for the region. As mentioned above, the presidential elections restored elected democratic governance to Mali, freeing up a backlog of aid that it seemed major donor countries, including France and the US, could not wait to deliver. But elected governance does not mean good governance, as demonstrated by Mali's first 20-year run with democracy. There is no guarantee the political class has changed, or that the old, corrupt ways will not return. A

86 "Massive numbers of Malians turn out to vote in the country's presidential election." UNDP. July 30, 2013.

87 *"IBK président du Mali : il a été élu à plus de 77% des voix," Huffington Post.* August 15, 2013; Mali Election, 2013.

88 Look, 2013.

89 Lacher, Wolfram. "Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahara-Sahel Region." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Paper, September 13, 2012, pp. 12, 14.

more immediate concern is that Mali, not to mention the region as a whole, might be assailed by terror and/or insurgency yet again. The old nationalist grievances remain. Many Tuareg still feel, with some legitimacy, neglected and marginalized by the Malian state and its Bamako bureaucrats, and abused by the army, just as they have for decades. And likewise the old racialist attitudes have not changed. They feel historically, culturally, and morally superior to other Malians, as their rhetoric shows, and they are still resentful that they were scattered among black-ruled African nation states by the colonial powers at the time of independence. As of the spring of 2014, as this volume goes to press, the MNLA still controls Kidal and has not disarmed, and it seems to be backtracking on agreements made in advance of the elections last July. Peace talks with the Malian government were suspended in September, and the MNLA and two other Azawad nationalist groups, one of them Arab and another that includes former Ansar Dine fighters, remain defiant, though talks at various levels have haltingly resumed.[90] Worse yet, open hostilities erupted in May of 2014 after an ill-advised visit to Kidal City by Prime Minister Moussa Mara resulted in a "fiasco," provoking bloody reprisals by the MNLA. In a subsequent attempt to retake Kidal a week later by force of arms, a Malian army column that included some troops trained by the EU training mission (EUTM), was repulsed by MNLA fighters, supported by other rebel groups. Once again Malian troops were humiliated by superior rebel fire power and discipline and fled, abandoning weapons and vehicles. Finger pointing ensued, as President Keita (IBK) called for a cease-fire and sacked the defense minister, the French military services opened investigations, and Prime Minister Mara warned of the danger that Islamists fighters were sheltering in the areas controlled by the MNLA.[91] For those familiar with the history of Tuareg nationalist rebellions, this chain of events sounds disturbingly familiar. From the other side, many Malians, especially along the Niger bend area, whether Songhai, Fulbe, or Tamasheq-speaking *bellah-iklan*, are still resentful of Tuareg dominance and attitudes of superiority that go back to the colonial period and before.[92] As recently as April 2013, the old Temedt anti-slavery organization in Mali was mobilizing to help slaves and former slaves of the Tuareg get free and remain free.[93] Meanwhile, MNLA fighters are still regarded as outlaws by many Malians throughout the country.[94]

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90 Penney, Joe. "Mali PM warns of Islamist threat within Tuareg rebels." Reuters. June 10, 2014.

91 Carayol, Rémi. "La bataille de Kidal, un mal pour un bien ?" Jeune Afrique. June 6, 2014; "Mali : cet étrange général Ag Gamou." *L'Opinion*. June 9, 2014; Penny, J., 2014.

92 McGregor, Andrew. "Merger of Northern Mali Rebel Movements Creates Political Distance from Islamist Militants." *Terrorism Monitor.* Vol. XI, Issue 21. November 14, 2013, p. 1.

93 Hicks, C., 2013.

94 Whitehouse, Bruce, 2013d. "Why Mali Won't be Ready for July Elections." *Bridges from Bamako,* Blog. April 30, 2013.

Elsewhere in this volume I have suggested Mali may need a new national conference to resolve the north-south divide and other long-term problems that hold the country back. Mali's first national conference, held in August of 1991 during its period of democratic transition, lasted barely a month. Other such conferences held in countries such as Benin and the DRC (then Zaire) lasted for months. The key achievement of Mali's national conference, the drawing up of the constitution of 1991, must have taken up nearly the entire conference agenda. Perhaps it is time for a second national conference, possibly modeled on the *concertations* model that was used with some success during the peace process at the end of the 1990–95 rebellion. Mali may also need some sort of "Truth and Reconciliation" process similar to the one that marked South Africa's transition to majority rule in the mid-1990s. For Mali to know peace and security, there must be some degree of reconciliation between the traditionally pastoral north and the traditionally agricultural south.

More threatening in the short run, however, is the lingering presence of Islamist terrorist organizations and their jihadist-Salafist fighters, not only in Mali, but across the Sahara-Sahel region. While the Islamist occupation ended effectively in March of 2013, the terrorists were not defeated, rounded up, and captured, but rather dispersed. Some retreated to remote Malian towns and settlements, some along the Niger River, and some into the northern desert. Many others dispersed to neighboring Saharan and Sahelian countries. Some crossed over into Niger, while others fled to Mauritania and Burkina, some accepting refuge, others retreating to areas outside of government control. Some may have fled to northern Nigeria where Boko Haram remains active and aggressive. Even troubled Darfur may be receiving former Malian rebel fighters. It is likely these Islamist groups will return to their nomadic criminal and terrorist operations in their new territories.[95]

Observers have expressed particular concern that southern Libya may become the Sahara's new terrorist haven now that northern Mali has been largely denied to them. McGregor claims AQIM is operating in southern Libya, and that the movement of terrorists is reversing course now, going from Mali to Libya, the opposite of what happened in 2011. The current Libyan government, such as it is, is trying to use independent militias to establish security in the south. This policy is similar to ATT's failed policy in northern Mali. As a Nigerien Tuareg former rebel put it, "The south of Libya, where anarchy reigns, has become a safe haven for the terrorists hunted in Mali."[96] We already know of two major Qa'ida terrorist operations mounted from southern Libya in 2013, the In Amenas natural gas facility seizure in January, and the bombing of the French uranium facility near Arlit in Niger in May. Both operations involved members of Belmokhtar's "Signers in Blood" Brigades, as well as MUJAO fighters. Chadian President Idriss Déby has warned that possible terrorist groups based in southern Libya pose a threat to him and to his regional neighbors, even to Europe. Southern Libya is still

95 "The UN and Mali: Secure the Sahara …" 2013; Crumley, 2013b, p. 1.

96 McGregor, 2013a, p. 2–4.

in turmoil. Tubu nomads and Arab tribes clash, hindering attempts at establishing security. Southern Libya is, in fact, becoming like northern Mali was in 2012, in that the government cannot establish security and stability in the country's Saharan reaches.[97] In the end, Libya may not be able to control its southern Saharan territories, and it may, like Mali, ultimately need international intervention.

Nor is southern Libya the only remaining area of concern in the Sahara-Sahel region. Dr. Berny Sébe, a Sahel expert at the University of Birmingham, says the Sahrawis, who are currently operating out of refugee camps in the far northwest of Algeria, may turn to the Islamists for support. They feel abandoned for two reasons: first, because the Algerians have not done enough to help them, and second, because Western nations seem to be supporting Moroccan claims to their homeland in the Western Sahara. Some 200,000 Sahrawis live in the Algerian refugee camps around Tindouf, many since the 1980s. UN peacekeepers have long warned that conflict in Mali and nearby Mauritania may spread to the Tindouf camps. These warnings have been echoed by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.[98] Like the Tuareg, the Sahrawis are an example of what a people whose nationalist aspirations have been denied for decades, and who are mobile, and who have backup room, can do when they feel they have nothing to lose.

The problems facing Mali are not particular to one country but are regional issues: Islamic extremism and the terrorism it frequently generates; the organized criminal networks that thrive off of the price differentials resulting from arguably artificial borders in the Sahara-Sahel zone; and the problem of corruption in political and economic relations that eats away at the social contract and the economic base of society. These and other problems will have to be addressed through a combination of regional as well as national and local initiatives, all with the support of the international community.

Another complication is the attitude of donor nations, whose contributions have been so important to countries like Mali and most of its regional neighbors, especially those as yet lacking a large hydrocarbon export sector. Mali's supposed democratic success made it the "donor darling" of the aid community until the coup of March 2012. The donor countries' faith in and support of ATT, even after his fall, now seems unjustified and unwise, to say the least.[99] Like the husband in a French farce, the donors were the last to see ATT's abuse of their trust. Donor countries were too focused on counterterrorism to give full consideration to the corrupting influence of organized criminal networks. These organized networks arguably represent as much of a threat to the stability and moral fiber of Mali and its neighbors as did the terrorists, though the terrorists clearly posed a greater threat to the donor countries. In the future, these countries' policies should balance prosecution of officials linked to organized crime with the recipient states' counterterrorism efforts. Clearly, too much emphasis had been placed on

97 McGregor, 2013a, pp. 1, 6.
98 Hirsch, 2013c, pp. 1–2.
99 Lacher, W. 2012, p. 12.

the threat of terrorism and not enough on the insidious criminal networks and their corrupting influence on government and the military. Similarly, the payment of ransoms by donor countries was severely compromising. It strengthened and even legitimized the Islamist militias, especially AQIM, while at the same time it provided yet another pot of unaccounted funds into which corrupt officials could dip.[100] Here again shortsighted donor priorities got in the way of establishing constructive policies for the recipient nations and contributed to the erosion of the trust and legitimacy of their governments, democratic or otherwise.

Systemic problems like poverty, corruption, and underdevelopment in the Sahara-Sahel zone, in the broader meta-region, and in Africa as a whole need to be addressed not through military training and materiel, but through genuine and systemic changes in the way the US and its Western allies do business with African countries. One such systemic change would be, for example, to end domestic subsidies on the production of commodities such as American cotton so Mali can sell its own commodities competitively on world markets. Another would be for the US and its European allies to take a more realistic approach to the problem of labor migration by accepting the fact that poor Africans need work and Europe needs, or thinks it needs, cheap labor. Yet another would be easing copyright and intellectual property restrictions in African countries so their students and educators can afford books, in a manner similar to the way pharmaceutical companies make otherwise costly medications available in Africa at reduced rates while still maintaining higher prices for these same drugs in more affluent countries. Still another would be for the US and its economically and commercially developed allies to require that their corporations behave as good corporate citizens in Africa by setting standards on environmental pollution and worker compensation more commensurate with Western standards than with the often lax standards required by many African governments. Likewise, Western-owned corporations should be required by their governments to certify they are not purchasing conflict gems and minerals, and that they are taking steps to ensure they are not doing business with notoriously corrupt government officials and operators of criminal networks. These solutions may appear naïve and unworkable, but given the repeated failures of the military approach, as discussed in Chapter 5, one is forced to wonder which approach is more naïve.

In this volume we have seen that the Sahara-Sahel region, as well as the broader meta-region I have defined is characterized by a common economy based on intra-regional connectivity, shared infrastructure, and locally understood moral sanction. However, as I have also shown, this intra-regional economy cannot function efficiently due to a number of factors. The creation of post-colonial nation states based on arbitrary colonial-era boundaries, exacerbated by dramatic changes in climate, technology, and society, led to extremist versions of traditional and regional commercial, migratory, infrastructural, and ideological structures. These extreme structures collided with systemic dysfunction, marked

100 Lacher, W. 2012, p. 14.

by political corruption and collusion, to create a volatile mix that both defines and permeates the Sahara-Sahel region. This volatile mix erupted at the Saharan core of the region in the Mali War of 2012–2013. Mali, a country divided between the majority traditionally agricultural black ethnic groups of the south and the minority Arabized and semi-Arabized traditionally nomadic peoples of the north, serves as a microcosm of the struggle playing out in surrounding nations in the aftermath of the Mali War and the Arab Spring. Mali, for better or for worse, holds the center of the Saharan core; as such, its path to restoration and recovery, if successful, may well determine the future viability of the Sahara-Sahel zone and the broader North and West African meta-region that surrounds it.

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Interview 116: US Embassy official, Malian—December 11, 2012.
Interview 117: ORTM (state broadcasting system) administrator—December 17, 2012.

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Glossary

Adagh	mountainous area in Kidal Région, northern Mali
Alfellaga	The first Tuareg insurgency against Mali, 1962–63
amenokal	Tamasheq: traditional leader of a Tuareg confederacy
amir	Arabic: commander, leader, prince, especially a leader of a jihad organization, for example: Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi, Osama bin Laden
ashamor, pl. ishumar	Tamasheq: Tuareg migrant in Maghreb, from *chômeur* (French: unemployed person)
badiya	Arabic: desert, wilderness, chaos, outside norms of settled society
bay'at	Arabic: allegiance, oath of allegiance sworn by Qa'ida operatives to leadership figures such as Osama bin Laden or Ayman al-Zawahiri
bellah	Songhai: servile cultivators who farm or manage livestock or do household service for Songhai or Tuareg masters
bid'a, bid'at	Arabic: innovation, changes and adaptations in Islam since the age of the companions of the Prophet, such as Sufism, syncretism, and even the four schools of law, a great sin in the eyes of Wahhabis and, to a lesser extent, Salafis.
Bidan	Arabic: Arabic-speaking Mauritanians and/or Malians
Cercle	Malian administrative district (small)
faggara, pl. fagagir	Arabic: underground channels, part of traditional Saharan irrigations systems
fatwa	legal opinion based on the holy texts of Islam, a decree or edict issued by a qualified Islamic scholar (*'alim*) that can have the force of law
garaj, pl. garawij	Arabic: trading entrepôt, from *garage* (French)
ghetto	hostel, a house or group of houses that becomes a way station and residential locus catering to migrants of one particular ethnic group, commonly found in the Algerian and Malian Sahara
goumiers, sing. goum	colonial era Tuareg and Arab irregular troops allied with the French

hajj	pilgrimage to Mecca, obligatory for all Muslims who can afford it
haratin	Arabic: servile groups or lineages who traditionally farm oases or wadis or manage livestock in the service of Arab nomads of the Sahara
hassan	Arabic: warrior-status Mauritanian tribes
hijra	Arabic: emigration, often with religious connotations, as in the Prophet's flight from Mecca to Medina in 622 A.D.
imoshagh	Tuareg warrior-status lineages
ineslemen	Tuareg clerical-status lineages
al-Jebha	Arabic: front, designates second Tuareg rebellion, 1990–1995
katiba	Arabic: cell, brigade
mafia	local term for criminal network in Sahara with control often based far outside of the Sahara
marabout	French: an Islamic clerical professional, an imam of a Friday mosque, a Qur'anic school teacher, etc., from Arabic: *mrabtin*, Islamic religious figures
méhariste	French desert camel corps
Niger bend	the great bend in the Niger River in Mali where it cuts due east from Timbuktu to near Gao before heading southeast towards the Gulf of Guinea
qadi, pl. qudah	Islamic judge
Région	Malian administrative district (large)
Sahrawi	Arabic-speaking nomadic people of Western Sahara, a disputed territory of the far western Sahara desert bordering on the Atlantic, claimed by Morocco since the 1970s
Salafist	Pertaining to the salafiyya (Arabic), an ideology within Islam that harks back to the "pure" Islam of the age of the *al-salaf al-salih* (the Prophet's companions and immediate successors) uncorrupted by later accretions, such as Shi'ism, medieval jurisprudence, and Sufism
shariah	Arabic: Islamic law
shaykh	Arabic: title of respect for an older man or a marabout
silsila	Arabic: chain of transmission of authority and knowledge, e.g. "I learned from my master who learned from so-and-so, who learned from so-and-so, who learned … etc., tracing back to the founder of the tariqa
Soudan Français	French colonial territory, becomes Mali after independence

Sufism	Islamic mysticism, a movement within Islam that focuses on individual spiritual development and features a master-disciple relationship and saint veneration, divided into orders or brotherhoods
takfir	excommunication of "impious" Muslims, a hard line position used only reluctantly by mainstream Muslims, but frequently resorted to by Salafists and other radical groups
tariqa, pl. turuk	Arabic: Sufi order, brotherhood
temushaga	Tuareg code of honor, knowledge of honor and shame and of one's own lineage
ulema	Arabic: (singular: *'alim*) Islamic scholars, traditional leaders of the Muslim community (ummah)
VBIED	Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device, car bomb, truck bomb
wadi	Arabic: seasonal stream, often dry (Spanish: *arroyo*)
zawiya	Arabic: desert religious school, often fortified, often doubles as warehouse or trading station, often linked to a Sufi tariqa; pl. from *zwaya* indicates Mauritanian maraboutic (clerical) tribes

Prefixes:

In-	Arabic: place of, as in In Amenas, In Salah
Banu-	Arabic: sons of, a tribal or clan designation, as in Banu Hassan
Kel-	Tamasheq: people of, as in Kel Essouq or Kel Adagh, or speakers of, as in Kel Tamasheq

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